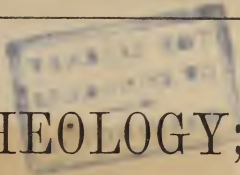


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Lyman Beecher

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VIEWS OF THEOLOGY;

AS DEVELOPED IN

THREE SERMONS,

AND ON

HIS TRIALS BEFORE THE PRESBYTERY AND
SYNOD OF CINCINNATI, JUNE, 1835.

WITH

REMARKS ON THE PRINCETON REVIEW.

BY

LYMAN BEECHER, D. D.



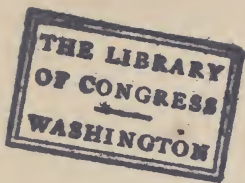
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INTRODUCTORY HISTORICAL STATEMENT.

DURING the pendency of my trials, and the appeal to the Assembly, innumerable false reports concerning me were circulated, and an impervious mist of prejudice environed me. But, with one exception, I made no reply. Once, however, such a flood of misrepresentation rolled in upon the Seminary, as began to alarm some of my students and other friends. I, therefore, published a concise historical statement of facts, which answered the purpose.

In addition to such reports, an injurious review of my "VIEWS OF THEOLOGY" was published in the *Princeton Repertory*. But at that time my pastoral labors and Seminary cares, and solicitation of funds, and preaching always four times in the week, and lecturing an hour every week-day, nine months successively, did, with the vexations of my ecclesiastical trials, so reduce my health, that I could not immediately answer it; and as it was limited to the circulation of a periodical, and as my one reply had provoked additional misrepresentations, and thus afforded calls for twenty more, I concluded, in order to end an aggressive controversy, and keep the peace, to remain silent, at least for a time.

But understanding, at length, that the article of the Princeton reviewer was embodied in one of two octavo volumes, as a public and permanent document, I have deemed it a duty to myself, and the Church of God, in preparing my works for the press, of my own knowledge, and with such aid as I have needed, to prepare this permanent historical statement, as well as the reply to the Princeton reviewer, which is subjoined to my Views of Theology. It is

my hope to renew no unkind feeling or discussion, and only to stand CORRECTLY in the view of the present and coming generations.

Ever since the days of Edwards, there has been a conflict between the divines of New England and those of a portion of the Presbyterian Church. The New England divinity was born in a revival of religion, and was specially designed to promote revivals. It was held and propagated by the friends and promoters of great revivals. Against this theology, under the name of Hopkinsianism, a fierce assault was made. This was followed by a new campaign, in which the watchword was Taylorism.

Peculiar interest was felt in this conflict by the opposing Presbyterian party, because, by reason of the plan of union, early established at the proposal of the Presbyterian Church, New England divines were continually entering that Church, carrying with them their divinity, and their views of the expediency of prosecuting benevolent enterprises by means of voluntary associations, in which both Presbyterians and Congregationalists could coöperate. The result, however, was, at length, that New England theology and New England measures soon began to exert an increasing influence in the Presbyterian Church.

To counteract this influence, the opposing portion of the Presbyterian Church organized benevolent societies designed to promote their views, placed under the immediate control of the Church. Still, however, they did not arrest the course of events. The prevalence of New England views and measures still continued to increase, until finally, in five years out of seven, without any special effort beforehand, those who embraced them elected the Moderator, and controlled the measures of the General Assembly. To prevent such a state of things, their opponents had already, by an early foresight, added to their own a very respectable denomination, with its illustrious leader, to maintain the balance of power.

But, as still the danger pressed, but two courses seemed to remain to arrest the alarming progress of New England influence; either to intimidate the leaders and their flock by trials for heresy, and

exclusion from the Church, or to revolutionize the Church itself. They tried them both. In the attempt to convict me of fundamental error, contrary to the teachings of the Confession of Faith and the word of God, they could not approach a majority. They resorted, therefore, to the second course; and, having accidentally a majority, they expelled from the Church, without trial, and by lawless violence, enough of the New England element to restore to themselves the ascendancy. Those thus expelled, and their friends, gathered themselves together on the basis of the constitution which had been so grossly violated, and organized the true constitutional General Assembly; and thus, as once before, was the Presbyterian Church rent in twain.

From this brief narration, it is plain that the trials to which I have referred were a great development of results in the theological history of this country. The accumulating influence of the conflicts of many years then came to a crisis. For this reason, it has appeared to me important to preserve a full account of those trials, as, perhaps, more fully than anything else representing the spirit and body of the times, and furnishing indispensable materials for the future history of our Church and nation.

Accordingly, I have taken pains to preserve in this volume, not only an account of the trial to which I was subjected, but the printed documents essential to a full understanding of it.

Of these, some were written before the outbreak of the general assault on the views of Dr. Taylor, of New Haven, and others subsequently. It is important, therefore, to say a few words respecting my relations to that controversy. The design of those who assailed Dr. Taylor was, if possible, to exclude him and his sentiments from the fellowship of the New England Churches. His most earnest opposer had been formerly known as a zealous and decided New England divinity man. But, alarmed at the spread of the opinions of Dr. Taylor, he undertook the work of assailing them, not only in New England, but in the Presbyterian Church. He, and his friends also, were desirous that I should engage

with them in the work of arresting Dr. Taylor's opinions. This, for many reasons, I refused to do. In the first place, I felt that I had a right to stand on independent ground, and not be swept in as a partisan on either side. Again, in many things of great moment I agreed with Dr. Taylor, although I did not adopt all parts of his system. Finally, I did not regard those parts of his system which were most violently assailed, even if erroneous, as of any such fundamental consequence as to exclude him from the fellowship of the New England and Presbyterian Churches.

For taking this ground, I was violently assailed in New England before my removal to the West, and also after my arrival there. Especially on my trial, great efforts were made to employ all that had, for these reasons, been written against me in New England, and all the odium and alarm which had been created against Dr. Taylor in the Presbyterian Church.

Before the coming up of this controversy, although well known for years as an Edwardean New England divine, I had enjoyed the affection and confidence of the leading men among the Princeton divines, and had been earnestly requested by them, as will soon appear, to enter the Presbyterian Church, they pledging to me their fellowship and coöperation. It cannot, therefore, be obscure what were the probable reasons of the effort to crush me, which was made just before and after I entered the Presbyterian Church. Then the Princeton and metropolitan power was relatively waning in the Church, and to prevent a result so unwelcome, three prominent leaders of the opposite party were successively put on trial, of whom I was counted worthy to be one.

The charges against me were chiefly based upon certain sermons of mine, of which those on the Native Character of Man hold the first place. These were published in 1827, and caused, at that time, no excitement or alarm anywhere. Much use was also made of my sermon on the Dependence and Free Agency of Man, published just before I left New England for the West, which also was received with general approbation. These are reprinted in the

commencement of the present volume. Reference was also made to the sermon on the Faith Once Delivered to the Saints, which has been already published in the second volume; and which, at the time of its publication, received the approval of Dr. Greene, then the honored father of the Presbyterian Church.

Among the documents written by others, and quoted against me, was one by an anonymous writer, signing himself an Edwardean,—a violent and bitter assailant of Dr. Taylor,—who to this day has not thought fit to assume the responsibility of writing a work which was so generally regarded with regret by his friends. Another was a letter to me, by the Rev. Asa Rand, the origin of which seems to have been his dissatisfaction that I did not adopt and defend those peculiarities of the taste scheme which he regarded as of fundamental importance. The object for which these documents were quoted was to produce the impression at the West that I was extensively regarded at the East as not sound in the faith, even before I removed from New England.

In addition to these things, strenuous efforts were made to connect me with whatever was peculiarly odious or alarming just at that time. In particular, the prosecutor sought to associate me with certain recent and odious developments of Perfectionism, with which I had never had any connection but as an opponent.

Moreover, as much alarm and hostility had been excited by the sentiments and measures of Mr. Finney, an attempt was also made to identify me with him.

When it is considered how inadequate and often erroneous were the views of many concerning the opinions of all with whom it was thus sought to identify me in odium, some faint conception may be formed, at this day, of the nature and power of the effort thus made to blast my reputation, and destroy my influence in the Presbyterian Church, especially in a Theological Seminary.

Recourse was had also to certain statements which I had made with reference to the incorporation of a false philosophy with the creeds of the Reformation, which seemed to implicate the standards

of the Presbyterian Church. These statements, however, were made on the assumption that the ancient interpretation, which had ever been regarded by New England divines as the true one, was, in fact, the true one. But about the time of my removal to the West this was called in question by Princeton divines, and a new exposition given to the terms of the creeds, which, obviating the difficulties I had always felt, and corresponding with my own belief, I adopted on my trial.

To make the matter plain, it is enough to advert to the fact, that on comparing the statements which I have made in vol. I. pp. 65—68, concerning the creeds of the Reformation, with my statements concerning them in my subsequent trials, at first sight there might appear to be an inconsistency between the two. There is, however, in fact, no inconsistency. The difference arises from the change just mentioned in the interpretation of the Confession of Faith, and of the creeds of the Reformation, on certain points. To illustrate this, we need only to refer to some prominent historical facts.

For many years the Edwardean divines of New England regarded the Confession of Faith as teaching the imputation of Adam's sin to his posterity, and their guilt and exposure to punishment for his act, in its strict sense, and according to the obvious and popular import of the language used. It was also regarded as teaching the absolute and natural inability of sinners to perform the duties demanded of them by God. To these doctrines were added the doctrine of a limited atonement, and of an eternal election based on such limitation. Not only did the New England divines suppose that these doctrines were taught in the Confession of Faith, but the old school Presbyterians of the Middle States asserted the same. On this ground they were assailed by Whelpley in his "Triangle." Nor in reply did they ever intimate that they did not regard the doctrines which he assailed as the true sense of the Confession of Faith. It was with this view of the import of these standards that

I used the language referred to, and all similar language used before my removal to the West.

It so happened, however, that, about the time of my removal, the Princeton divines, under the stress of their controversies with New England, introduced a new exposition of the Confession of Faith on the most important and difficult of these points,—I refer to the imputation and guilt of Adam's sin. In this they denied all that the New England divines had opposed,—namely, a mysterious union with Adam, so as literally to sin in his sin; or a transfer of his moral character to us; or any real and proper guilt for his act, and any true and proper punishment for it. They contended that the words *guilt* and *punishment* were not to be taken in their common and popular sense, but in a sense strictly technical and theological, to denote social liability to evil, in consequence of the act of Adam, which evil is technically called punishment.

These views were set forth at length in the *Princeton Repertory* and in Hodge's Commentary on the Romans; and it was affirmed that they had been the views of the Reformers from the beginning, and of the Orthodox as far back as to the days of Augustine. Of this they quoted what seemed to be sufficient proof.

The effect of this was a renunciation of the old Triangular interpretation (so called), by which the Confession of Faith was brought into accordance with the views which New England divines and I myself had always defended, rejecting what we had always regarded as false and pernicious theories, interwoven with the real doctrines of the Gospel. In these circumstances, I saw no reason for not adopting this mode of interpreting the Confession, and did adopt it. I also so interpreted the language used to express the sinner's inability as to accord with my interpretation of similar language in the Bible; that is, so as to denote moral inability, or a strong and voluntary aversion to duty. The doctrine of limited atonement I do not regard as taught in the Confession.

As thus interpreted, it is plain that the Confession of Faith is free from the false theories which, according to the first mode of

interpretation, rendered it justly liable to the censures which I bestowed upon it. As first understood, I do not retract those censures. But understood as I interpreted it, in accordance with the Princeton divines, it deserves the commendations which I have bestowed upon it, so far as the substance of doctrine is concerned, though such a technical use of the terms *guilt*, *punishment*, &c., is not desirable, because so liable to be misunderstood.

I ought, however, to add, that this interpretation of Princeton was an entire innovation on the old Triangular theology, which for many years had so violently assailed the New England divines. They retained, to be sure, the old words, but they gave them a New England sense, and affirmed that it was the true and original sense.

Since then, the Princeton divines seem to have pursued an uncertain course. They have not formally renounced their late ground, and I trust they will not; and yet they have quoted, with applause, men who teach the doctrine of imputation in the very sense in which they formerly disclaimed it. Whether this has arisen from the want of perspicacity, or from a real change of opinion, or from a desire to please both sides, I am unable to say.

One thing, however, must be admitted as true, — that there are many, both in this country and in the Old World, who are not yet willing to adopt their New England exposition of the standards of their Church, but still hold them in such a sense as to be exposed to the criticisms which I originally directed against that exposition.

There is reason to hope that the recent Princeton exposition of the standards will be received as the true one, for it is by all means to be desired that the influence of documents so ancient and powerful should be on the side of truth. On this supposition, I wish my censures to be understood not as directed against the standards, but against a prevalent, erroneous and injurious interpretation of them.

SERMON I.

DEPENDENCE AND FREE AGENCY.

“Without me ye can do nothing.” — JOHN 15 : 5.

IT is manifest, from the Bible, that Jesus Christ is the acting Divinity of the universe. Everywhere the attributes, works and worship, which belong to God, are ascribed to him. Omniscience, omnipresence, omnipotence, eternity, immutability, infinite benevolence, justice, mercy and truth, are his attributes; and his works are such as correspond with them. He made all things, and by him all things consist. It is He who in the beginning said, “Let there be light, and there was light;” who is revealed as “upholding all things by the word of his power;” who governs material agents, and sways the sceptre of moral empire over earth and heaven. The law is in his hand as Mediator, and the Gospel with its remedial influence; and he is “head over all things to the church.” It was his praise which the morning stars “sang together,” and which animated the heavenly host when they shouted, “Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good will toward men.”

The text announces the universal and entire dominion of Jesus Christ, and the universal and entire dependence of man upon him for ability to do anything. This dependence, like the nature of his government, is of two kinds, natural and moral. The one is occasioned by our incapacity of self-exist-

ence, and self-sustained physical action. The other is a dependence resulting from our sinful character, and the consequent necessity of an atonement and a moral renovation to secure our pardon and meetness for heaven.

I propose, in this discourse, to give a Scriptural account of the dependence of man upon Jesus Christ, in both these respects ; as a creature and as a sinner.

As a creature, it is obvious that man is dependent on Christ for all his natural and moral powers. In his material organization, it was Christ that "did see his substance yet being unperfect, and in whose book all his members were written, which in continuance were fashioned, when as yet there was none of them." It was Christ who created his mind, his power of thought, and of mental and moral action ; his perception, judgment, reason ; his capacity of happiness and misery ; his ability — under the guidance and influence of the government of God — to choose the good and refuse the evil. These are all attributes given him in creation, and from the constitution according to which his being will be continued.

But is there, in this beautiful structure of body and mind, any self-preserving energy, that can dispense with the constant upholding power of Christ? None. Nothing is self-existent but God. "In him [Christ] we live, and move, and have our being." That he is as able to create mind as to create matter, who can doubt? That he is as able to create accountable agents, to be governed by the laws and administration of his moral kingdom, as to create animals to be governed by appetite and instinct, who will deny? And that he has created and does uphold and govern man, as a rational, free, and accountable agent, we know, not only from his own testimony, but from our own perfect consciousness.

It is equally apparent from Revelation, that men are dependent on Jesus Christ for the successful application of their natural powers. The springs of life and the occasions of disease are all at his disposal. The great laws of nature are the instruments of his power, to kill and to make alive.. When he purifies the atmosphere, health follows the journeys of the sun ; and when he gives commandment, the poisonous epidemic moves onward, and wraps around the earth the belt of death. There is no skill that can fortify against it, no flight that can escape it, no power that can resist it. And when he would save, there are no perils that can baffle his protection. Myriads burst into being, and rise up under his smile, and at his displeasure melt away like vapors before the sun.

This dependence upon Christ for successful effort extends to the intellectual as well as to the physical nature of man. Through the medium of disease, he can send upon the mind bewildered thoughts, impaired memory, incapacity of attention, instability of purpose, and fear and faintness of heart. Upon the ordering of his Providence depend, also, not only our capacities, but all our opportunities for successful action. All have not been Luthers, or Bonapartes, who may have possessed the capacity of acting the part which they acted. He who creates the endowments of man puts them into ample requisition, or sends them into relative obscurity. Nor is it in the power of human greatness, even with opportunity, to secure the successful execution of the wisest plans ; for this depends on innumerable contingencies, unforeseen to any but the eye of God ; upon natural causes, unmanageable by human power ; and upon human volitions, affected by the innumerable motives included in the ever-varying Providence of God ; and on the passions and prejudices and conflicting

interests of men. Nothing is more impenetrable than the veil which hides from man those events of futurity which depend on human volitions and actions.

Such is the dependence of man upon Christ as a creature. But there is another kind of dependence, resulting from his character and condition as a sinner. This condition is hopeless, without Christ. Direct forgiveness of sin, on condition of repentance, is impossible, upon principles of law. To make an atonement, was what man could not do; and to save without an atonement, was "what the law could not do." The influence of law depends on its rewards and its penalties. Suspend these, and you paralyze its power, and in the same degree you impair its influence upon the mind, and open the door to rebellion and anarchy.

For that influence, therefore, which sustains the law of God, and opens the door of mercy-to a lost world, men are dependent on the Lord Jesus Christ. The law could not forgive and maintain its power. Angels could make no atonement, and no man could redeem his brother. Works could not justify, and the blood of bulls and of goats, and the ashes of an heifer, could not take away sin. Thousands of rams, and of rivers of oil, and the blood of the first-born, could not purchase redemption. The inability of man to make an atonement for sin was therefore a natural impossibility, absolute and entire.

It must be added, also, that, as sinners, men are dependent on Christ for a willingness to do anything which will save their souls. This is not a dependence created by any such constitutional defect of mind as renders obedience to the extent of divine requirement a natural impossibility; or by any destruction which sin has occasioned of the powers requisite to free agency and accountability. These all remain, per-

verted, indeed,—wholly perverted, and hopeless of recovery without the grace of God,—but not annihilated, or impaired in respect to their competency to create perfect obligation, and to sustain, in joy or in woe forever, all the responsibilities of the government of God, as obeyed or disobeyed.

Man is not so constituted as that no choice, good or evil, can be originated by him, which God, by an immediate efficiency, does not produce. Nor is he made accountable for a nature which was created in him as really as his intellect or his bones and sinews; nor for moral qualities, which are as involuntary as his appetites or his instincts, and which render choice, not in accordance with them, a natural impossibility.

The dependence of man upon Christ is in no sense the dependence of his deficient constitution as a free agent, but of his deficient character as a sinner,—the obstinate perversion of his free agency. Still it is a dependence not the less real or certain: for a sinner may wilfully make his destruction certain, and render grace indispensable to avert his ruin. It is this kind of dependence, originating in the obliquity of the will, which meets and baffles our unaided efforts at every step of our attempt to persuade men to be reconciled to God.

Who, without the grace of Christ, can keep back from sin the depraved mind of individuals and communities; or rouse man from the deep slumbers of a willing ignorance and obstinate stupidity; or bring home the commandment, and flash in upon the dark unwilling mind the painful conviction of sin? And even when this is done, who can subdue the will, but He who commanded the light to shine out of darkness,—but He who stilled the raging tempest on the sea,—before whom disease fled, and death yielded up its victims? It is in the day of His power only that any sinner ever submits

to God, and becomes a willing subject of his perfect government.

It seems to be thought by sinners, when they are awakened, and pressed with obligation to submit, that their act of refusal is not of the same nature with other acts of choice; that if it be in some sense voluntary, it is in a sense so unique as greatly to mitigate, if not to annihilate, its criminality.

But, in respect to its being the voluntary *action* of the mind, it is as really so as any act of choice whatever, and is distinguished from ordinary volitions only by this,—that it includes and absorbs, more entirely than any other, the whole energy of the mind, and comprehends in it the greatest amount and intensity of criminal purpose of which a sinful mind is capable. It is the most voluntary and the most criminal decision of which a sinner is capable, and made in defiance of the most perfect obligations to the contrary. Thus the Holy Ghost decides, when he comes to reprove the world of sin, because they believe not. And yet it is a decision, in point of fact, irrevocable, but by the grace of God.

It seems to be a fact, in the history of perverted mind, that, once ruined, it never recovers itself. In fallen angels it has not, in fallen man it does not; but the disease rages on, unreclaimed by its own miseries, and only exasperated by rejected remedies. The way of man is not in himself. Wise is he to do evil, but to do good he has no knowledge. The main-spring of the soul for holy action is gone, and divine influence is the only substitute. It is the sinner's duty to repent, but he refuses. It is his duty to come to Christ, but he will not. His carnal mind is enmity against God, and he will not submit. His heart is fully set within him to do

evil, and he will not turn. Motives and obligation are by his obstinacy swept away. The blood of Christ and the joys of heaven plead in vain; and in vain are hell and destruction uncovered before him.

“Madness, by nature, reigns within,
The passions burn and rage;
Till God’s own Son, with skill divine,
The inward fire assuage.”

I have only to add, what is especially taught in the text, that for the continuance and consummation of holiness every Christian is dependent on Christ. When the heart is renewed, it possesses no self-preserving energy. If angels, great in might and perfect in holiness, and Adam, our ancestor, created after the image of God, could fall, how feeble is the guarantee of the continuance and consummation of holiness from the sufficiency of its own feeble beginnings! The question has been asked, whether it is possible for a saint to fall; and the answer is, that, left to himself, and aside from the preservation of Christ, it is not only possible that he may fall, but certain that he will fall. Not because his growth in grace and perseverance is a natural impossibility; not because he cannot so watch, and pray, and strive, and fight, as to endure to the end; but because, through remaining sin, and deceitfulness, and sloth of heart, he will not watch, and pray, and strive, and fight, so as to obtain the victory, except as Jesus watches over him, and intercedes for him, and sustains, and protects, and guides, and gives him the victory.

To this plain Scriptural account of man’s dependence on Christ for his capacities and powers of action as a free agent, and also for their restoration by grace to their unperverted

exercise, it might seem as if no objection could be raised ; and yet no subject has been beset with objections more numerous, acute, or perplexing. To some of these I propose to attend, in the sequel of this discourse.

OBJECTION 1. It is objected that the “doctrine of dependence on the sovereign grace of God for the commencement and continuance of evangelical obedience is *inconsistent* with the doctrine of man’s free agency and accountability ; — that the two doctrines never have been and never will be reconciled ; — that all who have made the attempt have but darkened counsel by words without knowledge ; — and that all who preach man’s dependence on the Holy Spirit for regeneration, and then call upon him to repent, and obey the Gospel, contradict, in one part of their discourse, what they inculcate in another.”

ANSWER. If the dependence of a sinner upon the special influence of the Spirit for ability to obey the Gospel were occasioned by such a constitution of mind as renders obedience a natural impossibility — for want of adequate powers, or knowledge, or motives — then it would be impossible to reconcile such dependence with accountability ; and it might truly be said they never have been and never will be reconciled.

It must certainly be admitted that, if God should command exercises which man can no more put forth than he can create a world, and should not himself work in him to produce them, it would be the requisition of a natural impossibility, which could not be reconciled with a just accountableness. Or, if he should command a change of moral tastes or instincts, which are a part of the soul’s created constitution, upon which the will cannot act, but which do themselves govern the will as absolutely as the helm governs the ship, then, also, the thing required would be a natural impossibility, and could not

be reconciled with free agency and accountability. But where is the inconsistency with free agency and accountability in the present case?

God commands the sinner to obey the Gospel; and the sinner, thoroughly furnished with all the powers and means of moral agency, refuses to obey. Rewards, threatenings, entreaties, expostulations, judgments and mercies, exhaust their power upon him, and he refuses; *he will not come to Christ, and resists always the Holy Ghost*. And what is there here to destroy free agency? Who puts forth a more giant free agency than the sinner, fully set to do evil? Would flexible wickedness be blamable, and is inflexible obstinacy blameless? If depraved a little, would he have no cloak for his sin; and do his crimes whiten, and his obligations fail, as his heart strengthens itself in opposition to God?

“But, if he will not repent unless God, by his special grace, interpose, how can he be to blame?” He can be to blame, because it is his duty to repent on the ground of his capacity and the divine requirement, and he refuses. He can be to blame, as the drunkard can be for his intemperance, because he is able and only unwilling to reform; as the thief can be, though he may never cease to do evil; as the pirate can be, though he may go on to shed blood till justice overtakes him.

“But is not his destruction certain, if the Lord does not have mercy upon him?” Most assuredly. “Well, then, how can he be to blame?” Because, with the plenary powers of a free agent, he has violated the law of the universe, and trodden under foot the blood of atonement, and despised the riches of the goodness of God, until public justice demands his death. Cannot a criminal deserve punishment unless some way is open for his actual escape from punishment,—

a way, too, which shall overrule his own contemptuous and obstinate rejection of proffered mercy?

And what has the certainty of his perseverance in evil to do with the reality of his free agency, or the mitigation of his guilt? Is uncertainty of choice and character essential to virtue? There is not a maxim of greater folly. Who does not know that good and ill desert in character rises with the relative certainty of its continuance? Is not the glorious God worthy of all praise, and Jesus Christ of all confidence, and Satan of all execration, though the choice and character of each will never change? And is not this the decision of common sense? Whose virtue and vice have reached their height or degradation more entirely than those, on the one hand, whose integrity is not suspected of change, or whose baseness, on the other, is hopeless of reformation? The sinner can be accountable, then, and he is accountable, for his impenitence and unbelief, though he will not turn, and God may never turn him, because he is able and only unwilling to do what God commands, and which, being done, would save his soul. Indeed, to be able and unwilling to obey God is the only possible way in which a free agent can become deserving of condemnation and punishment. So long as he is able and willing to obey, there can be no sin; and the moment the ability of obedience ceases, the commission of sin becomes impossible.*

OBJECTION 2. "This distinction between the ability of man as a free agent, and his inability as a sinner, is a mere metaphysical subtilty, which common minds cannot understand, and which is only calculated to perplex and bewilder."

ANSWER. It is not a metaphysical subtilty, nor a distinc-

* Dr. Wilson founds one charge of heresy on this passage.

tion which cannot be understood. It is, on the contrary, a distinction singularly plain, and obvious to popular apprehension, and one recognized and sanctioned by the common sense of all mankind. The difference between unthinking matter and mind,—between a beast and a man, an idiot and a rational being,—between government by instinct or force and government by law,—between an infant who cannot, and a sluggard who will not work,—between the rich man, who is able and unwilling to give, and the poor man, who is willing but unable,—between subjects who are compelled to fight against their country, or those who do it voluntarily,—is as plain to the common as to the most profound minds. There is no position which unites more universally and entirely the suffrages of the whole human race than the necessity of a capacity for obedience to the existence of obligation, and to the desert of punishment for non-obedience.*

The belief, in natural philosophy, that no effect can exist without a cause, is not more deep and universal in the mind of man, than the belief that, in moral government, no obligation *can be created without a capacity commensurate with the demand, and which renders it practicable and reasonable*; and, on the contrary, where all the requisite powers are believed to exist, and their required exercise is prevented only as a matter of choice, there, without a dissenting voice, human nature awards guilt and desert of punishment. Man is so formed as to see and feel the difference between his own voluntary and involuntary action. His knowledge of his voluntariness and desert is of all knowledge the most perfect; and so perfect that he cannot reason it away by any possible sophistry, more than he can reason away his eyesight with

* Another charge is based on this passage.

his eyes open, or his own existence against consciousness. And this consciousness of accountability, attached to his own voluntary action, man ascribes, by analogy, to the voluntary actions of other men; and never, in his own case, or in the case of others, ascribes it to any actions which are not voluntary, but which are instinctive or coerced.

This is the basis of all distinction between right and wrong, which pervades the family in its moral government, and which runs through all the forms of human association in civil government. And no doubt the same analogy guides the judgment and feelings of angels, and all the high intelligences of the universe; insomuch, that the intellect and the consciousness of the universe must be unmade and reversed, before the justice of God can be reconciled with the requisition of natural impossibilities, and the punishment of subjects for not doing what they could not; and an equal reverse of the constitution and public opinion of the universe must take place, before the voluntary, obstinate refusal to obey the commands of God, as a practicable and reasonable service, shall fail to bring out from the obedient and disobedient alike the universal decision of guilt and just condemnation.

Is it a metaphysical trifle, then, whether God commands effects in his moral government, without an adequate ground or reason in his subjects for their existence? Is it not the pivot on which turns the question of its rectitude or injustice, of the riches of its goodness and mercy, or its unparalleled cruelty and severity? If the command to perform natural impossibilities, and punishment for their non-performance, is not unjust, what is unjust? What could the most high God do that would be unjust?

It has been said that, "though man has lost his ability to obey, God has not lost his right to command." But can the

rights of a moral government survive the extinction of those attributes which constitute accountability? Had the fall produced universal idiocy, would the rights of moral government have survived the universal extinction of reason? Had the fall reduced our race to the capacity of mere animals, would the rights of moral government have still remained? If the ability to obey were as really gone as if reason were extinct, or men had become animals, or machines, or trees; could the rights of moral government remain, when the attributes of accountability had ceased to be?

The capacity of man for moral government as a free agent, taken with the reasonableness of divine requirements as corresponding with it and sustained by it; and the dependence of man, as a sinner, upon the free and sovereign grace of God, are the pillars of the Mediator's throne; the one of his justice, the other of his mercy. These distinctions, therefore, are not trifles. It is grace abounding in the restoration to unperturbed action of free agency self-perturbed to a just condemnation, which inspires and perpetuates the song which no one but the ransomed of the Lord can sing.

OBJECTION 3. "But what do you mean by natural ability in a free agent to put forth right spiritual exercises; and what have natural powers to do in the putting forth of holy affections?"

ANSWER. I would ask, in answer, What is meant by the *free agency* of man, which all admit to be real? Does it mean only the unavoidable necessity of sinning on the one hand, and the natural impossibility of obedience on the other? But, if it does mean anything which is requisite to constitute obligation and guilt, what less can it mean than the capacity of choice and action, commensurate with the divine requirement? Or is it a word without meaning, which has come

down with our creeds to amuse the ear, and keep off odium from a system of real fatality?

By natural ability, I mean what the law of God means, when it says, "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy HEART, and with all thy SOUL, and with all thy STRENGTH, and with all thy MIND;" and what the Gospel means, when, in the form of a parable, it declares, that he gave "to every man according to his several ability," and that the moral obligation to improve corresponded with the *talents* given, and the ability possessed for their improvement.

I mean, that God does not reap where he has not sowed, or gather where he has not strewed; but requires according to what a man hath, and not according to what he hath not,—much of him to whom much is given, and little of him to whom little is given.

I mean, that God knows how to create intelligent beings, with such powers of mind that, being upheld and placed under law, they are so capable of obedience as to create perfect and infinite obligation to obey; the violation of which brings upon the sinner a just condemnation to eternal death.

I mean, what the Confession of Faith of the Presbyterian and Congregational churches means,* that "God hath endued the will of man with that natural liberty and power of acting upon choice, that it is neither forced, nor by any absolute necessity of nature determined to do good or evil;" so that by his decrees "neither is God the author of sin, nor is violence offered to the will of the creatures, nor is the

* See articles "Free Will," and "Of God's Eternal Decree," in Cambridge and Saybrook Platform, and in the Confession of Faith of the Presbyterian Church.

liberty or contingency of second causes taken away, but rather established."

OBJECTION 4. But it is said, "It seems to amount to about the same thing, whether a man cannot, or can and will not, obey the Gospel, or whether his impotency be natural or moral; he is equally certain to perish, if God does not remove it."

ANSWER. It might as well be said that muscular power perverted is as if it were not; that intellect perverted is the same as idiocy; and conscience seared is the same as if none had been given; that bread rejected to starvation is the same as inevitable famine,—as to say that the perversion of all the competent powers of obedience is the same thing as their non-existence.

Does it amount to the same thing, whether a man cannot be temperate, or can be and will not? cannot be honest, or can be and will not? A man, as a free agent, may, indeed, make his own destruction *as certain* as if he *could not* help it. But does it make no difference, as to his character and desert, whether he perishes from the natural impossibility of being saved, or from a voluntary obstinacy in rejecting salvation? And does it amount to the same thing, in respect to God and his glorious government, whether sinners fall under the operation of its penalties from a natural impossibility of escape, or by a voluntary obstinacy in despising the riches of the goodness of God? Provided a man, as a matter of certainty, dies at a given time, does it amount to the same thing, whether he was killed unavoidably, or committed suicide? was thrust off a precipice against his will, or threw himself off? was poisoned unwittingly, or purposely poisoned himself? was assassinated by the dagger of another, or thrust a dagger into his own bosom?

OBJECTION 5. "If man, as a free agent, is able of himself to repent and obey the Gospel, and is only dependent as a sinner, then the atonement was unnecessary, and he may be his own Saviour."

ANSWER. We have seen that the dependence of man on Christ for an atonement was created by the natural impossibility of his making one. It was what the law could not do, and man could not do, and none but Christ could do. But the sinner's dependence on the Holy Ghost is occasioned by his wilful refusal to accept the atonement. Had he been willing to accept an atonement, he could not have made one. But his voluntary and obstinate rejection of the atonement made for him, and offered to him, is what renders the Holy Spirit indispensable to his salvation.

OBJECTION 6. "This distinction between man's natural ability, as a free agent, and his dependence only as a sinner, is a mere human theory, not taught in the Bible."

ANSWER. *It is a distinction taught in the Bible as plainly, variously and copiously, as any other doctrine whatever.* It has the same relation to the system of revealed truth which the being of God has, and his moral government, and the sinfulness of man, and the atonement, and renovation by the Spirit, and justice in condemnation, and grace and mercy in redemption. Like the doctrine of cause and effect in the natural world, it is assumed; like the being of God, it is taken for granted, and constantly acted upon; like the existence of man, and of the world, it is treated as a matter of fact.

Besides, capacity, as the ground and measure of obligation, is expressly recognized as a fundamental principle of the government of God. The law itself recognizes it, in demanding love with all the heart, soul, mind and strength. The

Gospel recognizes it, in the bestowment of talents upon every man according to his several ability, and the award of punishment for ability neglected; and by repelling as a slander the implication that God demands the performance of impossible service, reaping where he had not sowed, &c. Obligation is expressly graduated according to what a man hath, and not according to what he hath not,—much of him to whom much is given, and little of him to whom little is given. Accordingly, evangelical obedience is ever enjoined as a reasonable service, for which, as to natural power, every man is thoroughly furnished, and for the neglect of which he has no excuse. Obedience is represented as the mind's action, and a proper object of command. "Come unto me, all ye that labor." "Make you a new heart and a new spirit, for why will ye die?" "My son, give me thine heart." "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ." "Repent ye." "Turn yourselves and live ye." "Humble yourselves in the sight of the Lord." "Learn of me, for I am meek and lowly in heart." Do all these mental and moral acts, commanded under the high responsibilities of eternal life or eternal death, as utterly surpass the capacity of man, as the making of worlds, or raising the dead? Instead of this, unbelief is regarded as the sinner's voluntary, ungrateful, wanton act of moral suicide, in rejecting Christ, refusing him, setting him at naught, treading under foot his blood, always resisting his Spirit, and despising the riches of the goodness of God. So far is it from being a matter of natural impotency, and so needless is it, that it is set forth as a most wonderful phenomenon. "What could have been done more to my vineyard that I have not done in it? Wherefore, when I looked that it should bring forth grapes, brought it forth wild grapes?" "Hear, O heavens: and give ear, O earth: for the Lord hath spoken:—

I have nourished and brought up children, and they have rebelled against me." "He marvelled because of their unbelief." But is it wonderful that nurtured children should not do impossible things? Is it wonderful that a vineyard, however cultivated, should not produce impossible fruits? Could it be marvellous that those to whom an act of faith was as impossible as an act of creation should not work miracles in its production?

But it is admitted that no new faculties are created in regeneration. What, then, is there to be changed, but the will? This, as we have seen, is the change commanded. Alienation is the crime, reconciliation the duty. Hence the means employed by Heaven are moral,—the law of the Lord, the word of God, the incorruptible seed, the Gospel, the cross of Christ, the blood of Christ. But what fitness have moral means for overcoming natural impossibilities? The Gospel might as well be employed to govern the material universe, instead of the law of gravity, as to recover alienated mind, if the impediments to obedience are natural impossibilities. And, after all, who has ever detected the mental incapacity of man to obey the Gospel? The motive to do it has been immense, and has wrought powerfully in innumerable cases; yet no defective organization has been found. On the contrary, every attribute which can be conceived as requisite to the full capacity of obedience is discovered; and such as under every form of government, beside that of God, is admitted to constitute entire capacity, and perfect accountability. The sinner has, indeed, abundant evidence, that to turn to God is difficult; evidence enough to close forever upon him every avenue of hope, if the Lord does not have mercy. But he has no evidence that the difficulty consists in the want of capacity for evangelical action. On the contrary,

every step of his moral history, closely scanned, flashes conviction on his conscience that the whole impediment is, in its nature, increase and continuance, voluntary. He is conscious of setting his affections on things below,—of minding earthly and neglecting heavenly things. His attention to the one, and neglect of the other, he knows to be voluntary; and his stupidity, and his darkness, and his hardness of heart, are the natural results of such a preference of the world, and neglect of the soul and the Gospel, as he knows himself to have been guilty of.

And when the Holy Ghost comes to convince of sin, what is the sin of which he convinces? Is it the sin of not working impossibilities? It is the sin of unbelief; he reproves the world of sin, "because they believe not." He corroborates the forebodings and convictions of conscience, by causing the sinner to feel and confess the perversion of his noble powers, and that God would be just in his condemnation. And the more clear the light of his conviction shines, the more distinct is the sinner's perception that he is—not destitute of capacity, but inflexibly unwilling to obey the Gospel. Does the Spirit of God produce convictions which are contrary to fact, and contrary to the teachings of the Bible? Never. What, then, when he moves on to that work of sovereign mercy, which no sinner ever resisted, and without which no one ever submitted to God,—what does he do? When he pours the daylight of omniscience upon the soul, and comes to search out what is amiss, and put in order that which is out of the way, what impediment to obedience does he find to be removed, and what work does he perform? He finds only the will perverted, and obstinately persisting in its sinful choice; and in the day of his power all he accomplishes is to make the sinner willing.

Hence, as obstinate disobedience to law and Gospel cannot cancel obligation or avert condemnation, those are punished with everlasting destruction to whom no special grace has been afforded, on the simple ground of the perversion of their capacities, as free agents, to purposes of evil. It is not grace resisted alone, but the ability of man perverted and abused, that brings down upon him aggravated guilt and condemnation. . The influence of the Spirit belongs wholly to the remedial system. Whereas ability commensurate with requirement is the equitable and everlasting foundation of the eternal moral government of God.

What was it which stopped the mouth of the man without a wedding garment? Would he have stood speechless, could he have replied truly that no garment had been provided for him? or that it was such an one as no human power could put on, while no divine power had been sent to his aid?

I am aware that *inability of some kind to obey the Gospel is ascribed to man in the Bible*. But it means the *impossibility* of becoming holy by any philosophical culture of the natural powers, or by any possible modification of our depraved nature, or simply by the inflexibility of an iron will. "The carnal mind is enmity against God: for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed *can* be. So then they that are in the flesh *cannot* please God." "No man *can* serve two masters." "Ye *cannot* serve God and mammon." "How *can* ye believe which receive honor one of another, and seek not the honor that cometh from God only?" "The natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God; for they are foolishness unto him: neither *can* he know them, because they are spiritually discerned." "How *can* ye, being evil, speak good things?" Do these and similar passages

teach that it is an absolute natural impossibility for an alienated sinner to become reconciled to God,—to crucify the flesh and to serve God in spirit,—to abandon mammon and cleave to God,—to give up the praise of men, and seek the honor that cometh from God? What greater injustice could be done to God, or violence to the Bible, than to represent the entire requisitions of his government upon the heart as the demand of natural impossibilities, under the fearful sanctions of eternal death? Again, it is said, “No man *can* come to me, except the Father which hath sent me draw him.” “Without me ye *can* do nothing.” But do these and similar passages intend a natural impossibility? Do they not rather speak a language appropriately expressing a fixed aversion, which is voluntary, and worthy of blame?

There is a single maxim of interpretation, which lies at the foundation of all exposition, and of all intelligible intercourse of man with man by signs, which sends a beam of light on this subject throughout the Bible, and forbids us to give to these passages the import of natural inability, and compels us to understand them as declaring only the inflexible obstinacy of man in sin. The maxim is, that language is to be understood in accordance with the known attributes of the subject. Now, when God is represented as legislating for the natural world, and sending out his commandment, and all nature moves, trembles, rejoices, obeys and praises Him; are we permitted to understand that the material creation, in all its departments of suns, and comets, and worlds, and winds, and waves, and mountains, and hills, and valleys, and cattle, and creeping things, is a cluster of so many intelligences, blessed with the knowledge of God, and pressed, by the responsibilities of accountable creatures, to obey and to praise him? But why not? Simply because we are acquainted with the

attributes of these things, and, from the known absence of intellect and voluntary power, are constrained to understand the phraseology as the language of metaphor.

By what authority, then, when we enter the moral kingdom of God, composed of mind, and law, and free agency, and accountability, and justice, and grace, and reward, and punishment, do we disregard the known attributes of accountable mind, and the revealed maxims of the divine moral government, and give to inability, when applied to voluntary beings and commanded duties, a passive and material import? Was there ever a greater, or a more needless, or a more pernicious, perversion of the laws of exposition? When the entire authority of heaven is made to bear on rational, immortal, accountable creatures, under the high responsibilities of eternal life or eternal death, and these commands are enforced by entreaty and expostulation, and their disregard is threatened with eternal ruin,—when the glory of God is to shine through eternity in his justice, and the riches of his goodness in his mercy,—is the dark lantern of human inability the only surface upon which the light is to fall that is to reflect upon principalities and powers, in heavenly places, the manifold wisdom of God? No language is more frequent, in the common intercourse of men, than the terms *unable*, *cannot*, and the like, to express either slight or determined and unchanging aversion. And the same use of these terms pervades the Bible. Inability, meaning only voluntary aversion, or permanent choice or disinclination, is ascribed to God, to Christ, and to good men, in as strong terms as inability to obey the Gospel is ascribed to sinners.

1. To God. “God, that *cannot* lie.” “The new moons and Sabbaths, the calling of assemblies, I *cannot* away with.”

“Though Moses and Samuel stood before me, yet my mind *could not* be toward this people.”

2. To Christ. “He *could there do no* mighty work.” “How often would I have gathered thy children together, even as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings, and ye would not.”

3. To good men. “*Can* ye drink of the cup that I drink of?” “Whosoever is born of God doth not commit sin, for his seed remaineth in him, and he CANNOT sin, because he is born of God.” Is it a natural impossibility for a Christian to commit sin?

4. To unsanctified men. “This is a hard saying, who *can* hear it?” “And Joshua said unto the people, Ye *cannot* serve the Lord, for he is a holy God.” “So we see that they *could not* enter in, because of unbelief.” “They that are in the flesh *cannot* please God.” None of these are natural impossibilities, and only moral inabilities, consisting in voluntary sinful action.

I have only to add, that nowhere do the Scriptures attach blame to an inability, resulting from inadequate powers, faculties, opportunities or means; and everywhere they do hold men accountable where the natural capacity is entire, and men are only obstinately unwilling to obey. There is not an instance upon record in the Bible, in which, according to the laws of fair interpretation, a natural impossibility of performing any spiritual duty which God has required is ascribed to man.

OBJECTION 6. “This doctrine of man’s ability as a free agent, and of his dependence on Christ only as a sinner, is an innovation upon the received doctrine of the orthodox church, and therefore the preceding exposition cannot be regarded as

correct. Has the entire church, in all ages, misunderstood the Bible?"

ANSWER. *The facts in the case are just the other way. The doctrine of man's free agency and natural ability as the ground of obligation and guilt, and of his impotency of will by reason of sin, has been the received doctrine of the orthodox church in all ages.*

The Christian fathers taught the free agency of man, in opposition to the Stoics, who taught the doctrine of fate; to the Gnostics, who taught a material depravity; and to the Manicheans, who taught a mental depravity in the essence of the soul. They taught free will,—not like Pelagius, in opposition to *a bias of will to evil, occasioned by the fall*, but in opposition to a natural impossibility of right action. In this view, with the Gnostic and Manichean heresies before them, Justin Martyr says: "The doctrine of the Christians is this—that nothing is done or suffered according to fate, but that every man doth good or evil *according to his own free choice.*" And Origen says: "The soul acts *by her own choice*, and it is *free* for her to incline to whatever part *she will.*" And Chrysostom, and Cyprian, and Jerome, are equally full and explicit on the subject.* Indeed, as Calvin says in substance, and as is common in such circumstances, they leaned off so far from fatality and material and mental depravity created in the soul—as doctrines violating common sense, and tending to sloth—that sometimes they seemed by the capacity of free will to supersede the necessity of special grace, though in other places they teach that man is despoiled of all strength to recover himself to holiness by

* See quotations, in Edwards on the Will, part II. sect. 5, and in Whitby on the Five Points, Discourse IV. chaps. 4 and 5.

his free will, and ascribe everything that is good in man to the Holy Spirit.* They were far, certainly, from being expert theologians, and further still from being correct philologists, in the exposition of the Bible. And yet they did perceive and firmly lay hold upon the two cardinal points,—of man's free agency as the ground of his obligation; and of his dependence on special grace for his restoration to holiness.

The same distinction was made in the controversy between Augustine and Pelagius. They did not use the term *free will* in the same sense, however, as the earlier fathers. In this controversy it ceased to be employed in opposition to fatalism and material and mental depravity, and to teach free agency as consisting in the capacity of choice. The natural ability of man as a free agent, and as the foundation of moral obligation, and guilt, and punishment, was not denied, but was equally admitted on both sides. The dispute respected wholly the character of man as affected by the fall, and particularly of his will, whether it is *powerfully biased to evil, or remains free from bias, and equally inclined to good as to evil: whether it is so competent by its own power, under the moral suasion of truth, to recover itself to holiness as actually to do it; or is so biased and sinfully impotent as to render a spiritual reformation hopeless but by the special influence of the Holy Spirit*. Augustine insisted on the bias of the will to evil, in consequence of the fall, and denied its self-restoring energy; while Pelagius denied the perverting influence of the fall, and asserted the sufficiency of the will and of the suasion of truth to the purposes of spiritual renovation.

The distinction, therefore, made in this discourse, between

* Institutes, book II. chap. 2, sects. 4 and 9.

the ability of man as a free agent, and his dependence as a sinner, *was recognized by Augustine, and by the earlier fathers.*

The same distinction was made by the Reformers, and by the Calvinists down to the Synod of Dort.

Luther taught the natural liberty of man as a free agent, and the bondage of his will as a totally-depraved sinner. "There is," he says, "no restraint either on the divine or human will. In both cases the will does what it does, whether good or bad, simply, and as at perfect liberty, in the exercise of its own faculty. . . . So long as the operative grace of God is absent from us, everything we do has in it a mixture of evil; and, therefore, of necessity, our works avail not to salvation. Here I do not mean a necessity of compulsion, but a necessity *as to the certainty of the event.* A man who has not the spirit of God does evil willingly and spontaneously. He is not violently impelled, against his will, as a thief is to the gallows. But the man cannot alter his disposition to evil; nay, even though he may be externally restrained from doing evil, he is averse to the restraint, and his inclination remains still the same. Again, when the Holy Spirit is pleased to change the will of a bad man, the new man still acts voluntarily; he is not compelled by the Spirit to determine contrary to his will, but his will itself is changed, and he cannot now do otherwise than love the good, as before he loved the evil;" * that is, a man cannot choose opposites at the same time; cannot choose against a present choice which yet remains.

Calvin declares that God is voluntary in his goodness; Satan in his wickedness; and man in his sin. "We must

* De Servo Arbitrio, as quoted in Milner's Church History, vol. v. cent. 16, chap. 12, sect. 2.

therefore observe," he says, "that man, having been corrupted by the fall, sins voluntarily, not with reluctance or constraint; with the strongest propensity of disposition, not with violent coercion; with the bias of his own passions, and not with external compulsion." He quotes Bernard, as agreeing with Augustine, in saying, "Among all the animals, man alone is free; and yet, by the intervention of sin, he suffers *a species of violence, but from the will, not from nature, so that he is not thereby deprived of his innate liberty.*" Both Augustine and the Reformers speak, indeed, of the bondage of the will, and of the necessity of sinning, and of the impossibility that a natural man should turn and save himself without grace; but they explain themselves to mean that certainty of continuance in sin which arises from a perverted free agency, and not from any natural impossibility. For "this necessity"—they say expressly—"is voluntary." "We are oppressed with a yoke, but no other than that of voluntary servitude; therefore our servitude renders us miserable, and our will renders us inexcusable." *

The Synod of Dort say: "Sincerely and most truly God shows in his word what is pleasing to him; namely, that they who are called should come to him. That many who are called do not come, and are not converted,—the fault of this is not in the Gospel, nor in Christ offered by the Gospel, nor in God inviting by the Gospel, and conferring various gifts on them, but in the persons themselves who are invited." †

Owen says: "Man is endued with such a liberty of will as is free from all outward compulsion and inward necessity, having an elective faculty of applying itself to that which seems good to it. Most free it is in all its acts, both in regard

* Calvin's Institutes, book II. chap. 3, sect. 5.

† Scott's Articles of the Synod of Dort, chaps. III. and IV. sects. 8 and 9.

to the object it chooseth, and in regard to that vital power and faculty whereby it worketh.”

It is true that the Reformers, and the disciples of Calvin, employ language, sometimes, which seems to deny the very existence of that natural ability which they concede, and to confound all distinctions between natural and moral government, and to throw mankind into one dark mass of impotency and death, from which any resurrection by human power is a natural impossibility. But a fair interpretation of their language will, for the most part, rescue them from this imputation. And, besides, what is said loosely and oratorically by men is never to be so interpreted as to set aside their most careful, deliberate, elementary definitions. We have shown that the inability ascribed to man in the Bible does not imply any natural impotency to spiritual obedience. But the language of the Bible is stronger, and more unqualified, than that of the Reformers, being limited and explained only by the known attributes of the subject; whereas the language of the Reformers is, at times, specific and precise, confining the impotency of man exclusively to the will — fairly implying only a moral, and not a natural inability. And when we consider that, in all their controversies, the free agency and natural ability of man were expressly admitted on both sides, and the sole point of debate was the moral condition of the will — as free from bias or under bias to evil — by what authority shall we metamorphose an alleged *moral impotency* into a *natural impossibility*, — and that at the expense, also, of making the greatest and best men contradict themselves? Doubtless, the impression often made by their language has been that of natural impotency; and, in modern days, there may be those who have not understood the language of the Reformers or the Bible on this subject, and who verily believe

that both teach that man has no ability, of any kind or degree, to do anything which is spiritually good, and that the rights of God to command and to punish survive the wreck and extinction in his subjects of all the elements of accountability. Of such, if there be such in the church, we have only to say, that when, for the time, they ought to be teachers, they have need that some one should teach them which be the first principles of the oracles of God. It must be admitted, however, that from the primitive age down to the time of Edwards, few saw the subject with clearness, or treated it with uniform precision and consistency. His appears to have been the mind that first rose above the mists which hung over the subject, and that saw, and developed, and fixed immutably and clearly, its great outlines. And, like the law of attraction in the solar system, it reduced every conflicting element of theology to order; and brought out from clouds and darkness the character of God; and armed the Gospel, in its faithful ministration from that day to this, with a power unknown to it since it passed from the lips of inspired men, and was committed to the ministry of the uninspired. In his treatise on the will, he taught and proved the natural capacity of man as a free agent and commensurate with divine requirement; that obligation to perform impossibilities cannot be created; and that the inability of man to obey the Gospel consists simply and only in a voluntary opposing inclination or choice, which, the more inflexible it is, and the more certain it is never to be given up without special grace, the more exceedingly sinful it is and deserving of punishment. Hence, as simple disobedience constitutes no apology for sinning, or necessity for continuing to sin, he taught and practised the duty of calling on sinners to render evangelical obedience immediately, whether they would hear or whether they would

forbear,—repelling the plea of inability, and tearing away excuses, and, by the authority of God, and the hopes of heaven, and the fears of hell, urging them to immediate submission. From him, through Bellamy, and Witherspoon, and Hopkins, and Smalley, and West, and Strong, and Dwight, and our seminaries, this doctrine of man's natural ability and obligation as a free agent to perform evangelical duties, and his inexcusable moral impotency or aversion, increasing in guilt with its increasing power, have become the received doctrines of the New England churches; and the preaching of immediate repentance and faith, as growing out of them, has been the practical course in the great and repeated and augmenting revivals of our land.

OBJECTION 7. But it is said, "This doctrine of man's free agency and natural ability to obey the Gospel sets aside the doctrine of the special influence of the Spirit in regeneration; for if man is of himself able to repent and believe, there is no necessity for the interposition of the Holy Spirit.

ANSWER. If the doctrine of free agency and natural ability does set aside the necessity of a special divine influence in regeneration, it cannot be true; for if there is a doctrine of the Bible which is unquestionable and fundamental, it is that of fallen man's dependence for actual holiness on the special influence of the Spirit; and if there be a fact which every man who is saved learns experimentally, it is the certainty of his perdition, if Christ by his Spirit does not subdue his will, and reconcile him to God.

But is it true that, if man, as a free agent, is able to obey the Gospel, he needs no influence of the Spirit to secure his actual obedience? Is ability to obey evidence of the certainty of obedience? Do free agents perform always all the duties of which they are capable? Is there no possible way

for man to be dependent on the Holy Spirit for obedience, but such a constitution of mind as renders obedience a natural impossibility? May not alienated subjects be voluntary in their rebellion, and at the same time so obstinate and fully set therein, that if God by his Spirit does not overcome their opposition, they will persist in it forever? The inference is as illogical as it is unscriptural, that ability to obey the Gospel implies any such certainty of obedience as supersedes the necessity of the Holy Spirit.

I am aware that many good men have been exceedingly jealous for God on this subject, supposing that they augment the evil of sin, and the justice and the mercy and the power of God, in exact proportion as they throw down the sinner into a condition of natural and absolute impotency. But, while I appreciate their motives, I cannot perceive the wisdom of their views. What possible foil to set off the evil of sin does natural impotency possess? One would think that a subject of God's glorious government, who can, but will not, obey him, might appear to himself and to the universe much more accountable, and much more guilty, in the day of judgment, than one whose capacity of obedience had been wholly annihilated by the sin of Adam. Does it illustrate the glory of God's justice more to punish the helpless and impotent, than to punish the voluntary but incorrigible? Is there a greater display of mercy in delivering a sinner from the *calamity of a ruined constitution* which makes obedience a natural impossibility, than in delivering him from a perverseness of will which despises the riches of the goodness of God, and renders his condemnation as inevitable as it is just? What is the view which will press on the reminiscence of the blessed in glory, and perpetuate the praises of heaven? Will it be a natural impossibility removed; or

incorrigible obstinacy overcome? As to the power of God displayed in regeneration, no doubt it is "the exceeding greatness of his power to us-ward who believe, according to the working of his mighty power which he wrought in Christ, when he raised him from the dead." But which is the greatest display of power, to change the natural constitution of the mind, or to reclaim the otherwise indomitable will of a rebel to loyalty and love? Men may obliterate natural affection, and form habits adverse to their natural constitution; and if it were only some material or intellectual defect to be supplied, or obstacle to be overcome, or some taste or instinct to be changed, it might seem a small thing for God to rectify the difficulty. He who could blot out and light up in a moment all the material orbs of the universe, with their apparatus and intelligent inhabitants, and who is continually creating and ushering into being minds around us, might seem to find but small occasion to display the exceeding greatness of his power, in the rectification of some constitutional defect. But when a mind, armed with such terrific power of accountable action as may bear justly the responsibilities imposed by God's eternal government, becomes so alienated, and fully set on evil, as to baffle the regular influence of law and Gospel, this creates an obstacle to the reclaiming of that mind vast and momentous; and furnishes occasion, probably, for the greatest display of omnipotence ever to be witnessed by the universe.

The question, then, which awakens the fears of some good men, is not, as they suppose, the question whether man is actually dependent on the special influence of the Holy Spirit for regeneration; but what is the nature, what the cause, ground or reason, of that dependence? Is it a dependence created by a natural impossibility, or by the inflexible, volun-

tary, unreasonable opposition of a free agent to the perfect character and glorious government of God? From the time of Edwards, the latter has been, and now is, the received doctrine of the ministers and churches of New England. And yet—plain as this subject would seem to be, and for more than half a century settled—still it is objected;—

OBJECTION 8. That “this doctrine of man’s free agency and ability is but a new edition of the exploded Arminian notion of the self-determining power, and conversion by moral suasion.”

ANSWER. We have seen that the Bible teaches the free agency and natural ability of man; that the primitive fathers, and Augustine, and Luther, and Calvin, and Edwards, and Bellamy, and Witherspoon, and Smalley, and West, and Strong, and Dwight, all recognize the capacity and obligation of man, as a free agent; and place his impotency exclusively in the perversity of his will. And is this Arminianism and the self-determining power? What is the self-determining power? It is a theory devised to escape from the certainty of human action, as implied in the government of God according to the counsel of his own will. To accomplish this, it was insisted that all voluntary action of mind, in order to be praise or blame worthy, must be uncertain, and occasioned by no influence whatever, *ab extra*; but the soul, shut up *in vacuo*, must put forth volitions, without any cause, ground, or reason, but its own internal sovereign good pleasure; and that even choice itself was good for nothing, which was not the product of an antecedent choice; so that every human volition must be impregnated with virtue by an antecedent choice, and all acts of mind by one act of choice before the first. This is the old Arminian notion of the self-deter-

mining power. And is it like? Like what? Like the capacity of acting in the view of motives, in accordance with the righteous requisitions of heaven?

Ask Edwards, and he will reply,—that the impossibility of choosing right would preclude obligation and guilt; and that if all which his antagonist meant by self-determining power was merely the capacity of choice in accordance with divine requirement, there could be no dispute on the subject. He held that it was only a moral inability, only the opposition of a contrary choice, which prevented a right choice in all cases.

OBJECTION 9. It is objected that, “this doctrine of man’s ability to obey the Gospel, and his dependence only as a sinner, if it be not Arminianism, is tending fast that way, and may be expected ultimately to eventuate in the overthrow of evangelical doctrine and revivals, and in cold Arminian formality, or a subtle and virulent heresy.”

ANSWER. But these tendencies, hitherto, have been so slow in coming into being, as might well allay our fears for many generations, if not forever. From Augustine to Edwards, and from Edwards to this day, the ability of man, as a free agent, has been taught, and his impotency, as consisting in a biased and perverted will: and from making the distinction clear and prominent, Arminianism has never been the result; but has resulted, as history will attest, from confounding this distinction, and sinking down man to the impotency of a natural impossibility of spiritual obedience. There are two ways of producing Arminianism; one is by teaching it, and another, more effectual, is the incorporating with the truth the revolting material of natural inability. The river whose channel is obstructed will send out its waters in lateral channels of desolation. Remove the obstructions, and the

vagrant waters will return gladly to their natural course. The most effectual way to promote Arminianism is to obstruct the channel of common sense and of revelation by the doctrine of *natural impotency*; while well-defined and guarded expositions of *natural ability* as the foundation of obligation, and of *moral inability* as consisting in obstinate aversion to evangelical obedience, are the most effectual means of its expulsion from Christendom.

The testimony of Neander, and of Pusey, Professor of Hebrew, in the University of Oxford, England, concerning the cause of the great German defection, speaks volumes on the subject. "It is a problem," says Professor Pusey, "of immense interest and importance to solve, how Germany, from having been, in appearance at least, sound, became, by a rapid change, and to a fearful extent, an unbelieving church. I was startled, when Neander, on my asking him to what he ascribed the progress of unbelief in Germany, said, 'The dead orthodoxy.' I was much prejudiced at first against the opinion, but came at last to no other result." * Now the dead orthodoxy of Germany included and was pervaded by the doctrine of man's natural inability to obey the Gospel.

It has been supposed by our friends at a distance that the great defection in New England from orthodoxy was occasioned by the new divinity, particularly the doctrine of natural ability and moral inability,—which was denominated "new divinity" fifty years ago, in opposition to what was then styled "old Calvinism." But the fact is, that in Boston and Massachusetts, as in Germany, the Arminian and Unitarian defection was the legitimate and undeniable pro-

* Biblical Repository for 1832, p. 586.

duct of "dead orthodoxy." So far as the Calvinistic system, as expounded by Edwards and the disciples of his school, prevailed, revivals prevailed, and heresy was kept back. To its proud waves they presented a barrier immovable as our iron-bound shores; while Calvinism, having degenerated to natural impotency, opened the breach through which the flood of the Arminian and Unitarian heresy came in. Over nearly the whole territory where prejudice reigned against the doctrines of Edwards and the revivals of his day — though his opponents were nominally Calvinistic — has the desolation of heresy rolled. And, most notoriously, it was "dead orthodoxy" that opened the dikes and let in this flood; and equally notorious is the fact, that it is Edwardsean Evangelism which is turning back this flood, and filling the channels from which it is retreating with the waters of life. The more minutely the religious statistics of New England are examined, the more unquestionable will the historic verity of these statements appear.

It is also a fact which stands out to observation, that Arminian proselytism, and Unitarian and Universalist heresy, and infidel fatality, find the easiest access to, and make the most havoc in communities, in proportion as the ultra Calvinism of natural inability is more plainly and frequently inculcated, and more unequivocally understood by the people. And far the greater proportion of the revivals of our land, it is well known, have come to pass under the auspices of Calvinism as modified by Edwards and the disciples of his school, and under the inculcation of ability and obligation, and urgent exhortations to immediate repentance and submission to God: while congregations and regions over which natural impotency and dependence, and the impenitent use of means, and waiting God's time, have disclosed their tend-

encies, have remained, like Egypt, dark, beside the land of Goshen; and like the mountains of Gilboa, on which there was no rain, nor fields of offerings; and like the bones in the valley of vision, dead, dry, very dry. Far be it from me to say or insinuate that no ministers are blessed with revivals who do not teach the doctrine of man's natural ability and moral inability. I mean, that where the doctrine of absolute inability is made to stand out in all its relations, and is unmodified by any counteracting truths, its results, so far as my observation has extended, are, without a single exception, most deadly to the cause of Christ, and the souls of men; and that, as a general fact, the Gospel as explained and pressed, upon the principles of ability and obligation, is more uniformly and eminently, than in any other mode of presentation, the power of God and the wisdom of God unto salvation.

But, while I thus advocate the doctrine of man's ability as a free agent, and his dependence on special grace as a sinner, as from the commencement of my ministry to this day I have not ceased to do, I am far from supposing that the doctrine is incapable of perversion, or that there is no danger that ardent and inexperienced minds may give to ability and obligation too much, and to dependence on the special influence of the Spirit too little, prominence. Nor are the fears and cautions of holy men, who love revivals, and have experimental knowledge on the subject, to be lightly regarded. But the danger of excess on the side of insisting upon ability and obligation is not to be averted by denying the doctrine. This would be like eclipsing the sun to prevent the occasional over-action of his rays, or to annihilate the attraction of gravity to avoid the accidental evils of which it is the occasion. Nor is the excess of some on the side of free agency and ability to be equalized

by pressing with equal frequency and exclusiveness by others the doctrine of dependence. Both doctrines are true, and exist in perfect harmony; and, by their united action, bring on the mind a strength of obligation, and weight of guilt, and a power of motive, wholly unparalleled by any other mode of exhibiting the Gospel which I have ever known. It has been said that they ought never to be preached together in the same sermon. It would be nearer the truth to say that they ought never to be separated. Should free agency and ability be so preached as to make and justify the impression that man is so able and so willing to obey the Gospel as that the special influence of the Spirit is not necessary to make him actually willing, it would be a doctrine fundamentally erroneous; and were dependence so preached as to make and justify the impression that God requires of men the performance of natural impossibilities, and that all which a sinner *can* do is impenitently to use the means and wait for sovereign grace; — this would be the subversion of accountability, and of all the principles of the moral government of God. It is when the capacity of man for obedience is asserted, and his own perversion of it is charged upon him, and God commands him to repent, and Christ, who died for him, exhorts, and his ambassadors plead, and the Spirit strives; that the commandment comes, and fear is awakened, and conscience armed, and sin revives, and the sinner dies. Experience evinces continually, in revivals, that there is no pressure upon the soul like that which is produced by the recognition of ability self-perverted, and the necessity of special divine influence self-created, by inflexible obstinacy in sin. If there be any truth which ever brought this soul of mine into the dust before God, with a conscious guilt which was insupportable, and an anguish the recollection of which the ages of eternity cannot

obliterate; it was the distinct perception of immortal powers voluntarily withdrawn from the service of God, and the certainty of a profitless and miserable eternity, if in the day of his power he did not make me willing to obey him. Day after day, and month after month, amid darkness visible and sickness of heart from hope deferred, this was the iron that entered my soul, and drew fast upon me the bands of death, — that God had made me capable of his perfect, blessed, immortal service, and I had turned away from it to beggarly elements; that by the blood of expiation he had opened to me a door of return, while my own obstinacy and God's justice threatened me with an eternity of everlasting uselessness, and guilt, and misery. And it was here, if anywhere, that God, by his truth, broke my hard heart and bowed my stubborn will.

And I must say, that while such has been my own experience of the two doctrines upon my own soul, such, also, during my whole ministry, has been my observation of their effects on the souls of others. They have constituted, under God, the power of my ministry, the burning focus and the breaking hammer; and so vital are the two principles, and so interwoven and diffused in all those discourses of mine which God has made most effectual in the conviction and conversion of sinners, that I could not preach one of them in a revival, after these principles had been obliterated. No other obstruction to the success of the Gospel is so great as the possession of the public mind by the belief of the natural and absolute inability of unconverted men. That belief has done more, I verily believe, to wrap in sackcloth the Sun of Righteousness, and perpetuate the shadow of death on those who might have been rejoicing in his light, than all errors beside. I cannot anticipate a greater calamity to the church than would follow

its universal inculcation and adoption. And most blessed and glorious, I am confident, will be the result, when her ministry, everywhere, shall rightly understand and teach, and their hearers universally shall admit, that the full ability of every sinner to comply with the terms of salvation, and the voluntary and obstinate perversion of this ability, together constitute the ground of the indispensableness of converting grace. So preached Apostles and Reformers and other successful ambassadors for Christ; and so was their message received by the multitudes in whom it was made the power of God unto salvation. And so will ministers universally preach, and their message be received, when all kindreds, and people, and tongues, shall be subdued to the obedience of faith.

SERMON II.

THE NATIVE CHARACTER OF MAN.

“Every one that loveth is born of God.” — 1 JOHN 4 : 7.

THE love here spoken of is holy love, which assimilates the subject to God. It is that love which is styled the fulfilling of the law, and which is the principle of evangelical obedience. It is religion; for every one that loveth knoweth God. But to know God is life eternal — is religion. This love does not belong to man by nature. It is never a quality of his heart as a consequence of his birth, but is the result, in all cases, of a special divine interposition. “Which were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God.”

It will be the object of this discourse to show that man is not religious by nature. By religion I mean supreme love to God. By man I mean the entire race. And by the proposition that man is not religious by nature, I mean that there is nothing in him which is religion, and nothing of which religion is the natural effect or consequence, without a special divine interposition. When natural objects produce certain effects uniformly, we suppose there is in them some cause for such results, which we call their nature; and if there be certain effects which they never produce, we say that it is not in their nature to produce them.

When it is affirmed, therefore, of man, that he is not

religious by nature, we mean that there is nothing in his constitution of mind or body of which religion is the result without a special divine interposition, and that the *first accountable character* which he sustains is not a religious character. It will not be denied, that if religion exists at all in man it must exist in his heart, and must consist primarily in the state of his will and affections towards God,—must include a predominant benevolence for God, and complacency in his character, and delight in his law, and obedience to his Gospel, and resignation to his will.

In view of these explanations, therefore, I observe,

I. THAT THE CONSCIOUSNESS OF EVERY MAN IN VIEW OF THE REQUIREMENTS OF THE LAW AND THE GOSPEL, IS EVIDENCE TO HIMSELF THAT HE POSSESSES NO RELIGION.

I appeal to the experience of every one in this assembly that has not been born again, whether religious affections have found a place in your heart, from your earliest recollection. Do you believe that you are truly pious? Can you lay your hand upon your heart, and look up to heaven and say, Thou knowest that I love thee more than all things beside? Do you love his word, his worship, his people? Do you maintain, with pleasure, secret prayer? Are you meek under provocation, and self-denying in temptation, and resigned in affliction? This is religion. But is this the experience of any one in this assembly who has no reason to believe that he is born of God? And if not, certainly you are not religious by nature. And if you present this outline of religious experience to your neighbor, you will find that he has nothing that answers to it. And if you extend the inquiry through the world, you will not find one whose first development of character is that of religion.

II. THE UNIFORM EXPERIENCE OF AWAKENED SINNERS

CORROBORATES THE SAME DOCTRINE. From the day of Pentecost to the present hour, multitudes have experienced deep anxiety for their souls, but universally the cause of it has been that they had no religion. They have perceived, always, that the law of God required of them a love which they did not feel, and Christian graces to which they were strangers. And nothing has been found more to aggravate their distress than the simple direction to love supremely the Lord their God, and Jesus Christ. Uniformly the reply has been, We cannot love; we cannot repent; we cannot believe. I am sensible that there are many who are not thus awakened; but does their stupidity discredit the consciousness of those who are awakened in respect to their own character? This consciousness, then, of all who are awakened, that they have no religion, is strong presumptive evidence that the same is the fact with respect to those who are not awakened.

III. TO THIS MAY BE ADDED THE TESTIMONY OF THOSE WHO FURNISH EVIDENCE OF PIETY. Their uniform testimony is that their religious experience is a state of the will and affections wholly unknown before.

It is not to be denied that some persons profess religion who disclaim the existence of any great change in the state of their will and affections towards God, and claim that they have always, from their earliest years, loved God. But it must be remembered that the religion which they claim is not such religion as has been described. To this they make no pretension, but ridicule it as visionary, enthusiastic and fanatical. Doubtless men may have such religion as these persons profess, without a change of heart. But I insist that the outline of religious experience which has been given is the religion of the Bible; and that all who are conscious of possessing it do testify that it is a state of the affections entirely

new; and this testimony of the pious strengthens the presumption that religion is never the first character of man, but always the result of a divine interposition.

IV. THE HISTORY OF THE WORLD IS UTTERLY INCONSISTENT WITH THE SUPPOSITION OF NATIVE PIETY IN MAN.

If a man is religious by nature, we should expect to witness the effects of early and universal piety in the history of the world. A world whose inhabitants all begin their accountable course religiously, could not surely furnish the same materials for history as a world whose early character is that of alienation from God. But does the history of the world confirm the supposition that man is religious by nature? Of those who, in adult age, afford credible evidence of piety, three-fourths at least continue to do so; and the reasons would be stronger in favor of perseverance, if religion were the first character of all men. But do three-fourths of the human race, or one-fourth, afford evidence of piety from childhood upward? Has it not been, till lately, a rare event to find it at all among children? Among real Christians religion is a predominant principle of action. But does the history of the world show that religion has been the predominant principle of action in the human race? What is the origin of governments, but necessity? Families cannot dwell in safety in this world without protection, and therefore associate in tribes; and tribes, wearied with the action and reaction of violence, coalesce for safety, and form the more extended communities of nations. Until these great associations were formed, the world had no rest, and the arts of civilized life were scarcely known. But nations have displayed the same principles of ambition and violence towards each other which marked the conduct of individuals, and families, and tribes. The history of nations is the history of crime and blood, and

not of peace and good-will to men. If men were religious by nature, we might expect that the knowledge and worship of the true God would be in every age universal. Instead of this, two-thirds of the human family have been idolaters. Notwithstanding the invisible things of God are clearly seen by the things that are made, even his eternal power and God-head,—and notwithstanding all that God has done by revelation, and by miracle, and by his Spirit,—two-thirds of the human family have changed the glory of the incorruptible God into an image made like to corruptible man, and to four-footed beasts and creeping things. Why is this? The evidence of His being is not obscure, and the divinity of idols is not supported by even specious evidence. The service of God is reasonable, pure, and benign; while that of idols is obscene, expensive, and bloody. Could a race, of which every individual commenced his accountable course under the influence of religion, have done thus?

V. IT IS THE UNIFORM TESTIMONY OF THE BIBLE, THAT MEN ARE NOT RELIGIOUS BY NATURE.

This is strongly implied in the utter silence of the Scriptures in respect to the piety of man by nature. If the first character which man sustains is a religious character, the Scriptures could not have failed to recognize it. It would be a commanding fact, which would extend its implications through every page, and modify every doctrine. Surely the descriptions of a religious, and of an alienated world, could not be the same. But let one examine, one by one, all the passages which speak of the heart of man, and he will find there is not *one* which declares, or implies, that it is the subject of religion by nature. Whence this silence? It is one great object of the Bible to make man acquainted with his own heart; and much is disclosed concerning its wickedness.

Why is nothing said of its excellence, if religion be one of its native attributes? This silence, though only negative testimony, corroborates greatly the preceding evidence, that man is not religious by nature.

VI. THE BIBLE ASCRIBES TO THE NATURAL HEART OF MAN A CHARACTER UTTERLY INCOMPATIBLE WITH THE EXISTENCE OF RELIGION. Before the flood, every imagination of *man's heart* is described as being *evil only, continually*; and after that event, *as evil still*, from his youth. This last declaration is made also as a reason why God in all future ages will no more curse the ground for man's sake,—affording testimony, not only that the heart of man was evil then from his youth, but that it would continue to be so through all ages future; unreclaimed by judgments, however numerous or severe. Thirteen hundred years later the hearts of the sons of men are described as “full of evil.” And later still as “deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked.” The account which is given of the heart by our Saviour is as explicit and forcible as any of the preceding,—“Out of the heart proceed evil thoughts, murders, adulteries, fornications, blasphemies.”

Upon this testimony of the Bible I remark, that the heart of man is never described as becoming thus wicked by any change *from native goodness to evil, since the fall of Adam*; but, when described as evangelically good, it is always done in terms which imply a change from *evil* to *goodness*.

Whenever men conduct wickedly, they are regarded as illustrating their own natural character,—as obeying the dictates of their own hearts. But when they manifest religious affections, these are described as the fruits of the Spirit; and when they are given up to irreclaimable wickedness, they

are given up to their own hearts' lust,—to their foolish and darkened hearts,—to vile affections through the lust of their own hearts, after their hard and impenitent hearts, treasuring up wrath. How, then, stands the testimony of the Bible concerning the heart of man? It is silent as to the existence in it of religion. That heart is described in terms which preclude its existence. That heart is never represented as becoming bad by the loss of religion, or as being good except as the effect of a divine interposition; and when abandoned to itself, it is always represented as being desperately wicked. Will it be alleged that this testimony is ancient, and that the heart of man may have changed for the better? To break the force of the testimony, it must not only be *possible* that a change *may* have taken place, but it must be proved that it *actually has taken place*. Can such proof be found in the Bible? Is there a passage which asserts or implies that a universal change has taken place in the heart of man since the preceding descriptions of it were placed upon record?

Will it be alleged that Enoch, and Noah, and Moses, and Abraham, and others, are spoken of as righteous, without any *mention* that they had experienced a change of heart? If it were so, it would not prove that no change had been experienced. The omission, in the record, to recognize the change, does not prove that it never happened. But it is implied of all these that they did experience a change of character. Faith implies a change of character, and is the gift of God. But by faith Abel offered a more excellent sacrifice than Cain, and this was a faith that works by love. By faith, Enoch walked with God. By faith, Abraham offered his son. By faith, Moses refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter. Will it be said that the preceding proof is contained in a few detached texts of Scripture?

These texts are the testimony of God. They relate to the subject in question, and are direct and explicit. They are not detached from the context, and made to speak a meaning which they would not be authorized to speak in their connection. And as to their being detached in any other sense, what if they were all contained on one page,—would that increase their perspicuity? Or what if they were multiplied an hundred-fold,—would that increase the evidence of divine testimony? How near together must the declarations of God be placed, and how often must they be repeated, to be entitled to credit? And what is the character of those to whom the Lord speaketh once, yea, twice, and they regard it not?

VII. THE SCRIPTURAL ACCOUNT OF CHILDHOOD AND YOUTH IMPLIES THAT MANKIND ARE NOT RELIGIOUS BY NATURE. “The imagination of man’s heart is evil from his youth.” “Childhood and youth are vanity.” “Foolishness is bound in the heart of a child.” “The wicked are estranged from the womb.”

Could all this be said of childhood and youth, if the first accountable character they sustain were a religious character? Is every imagination of the pious, evil? Is religion vanity, or folly, or estrangement from God? It must be remembered also that the preceding are not specific descriptions of *some* children and youth, but descriptions of the entire race of man in the early periods of life.

VIII. THE GENERIC DESCRIPTIONS OF MAN, CONTAINED IN THE BIBLE, ARE SUCH AS PRECLUDE THE SUPPOSITION THAT HE IS RELIGIOUS BY NATURE.

The term *man* includes all men of all nations. One nation is not man. All nations but one, are not man. Every individual of the race is included; and whatever is declared of the *genus* is declared concerning every individual. Is the

lion ferocious? It is the character of all his race. Is the asp venomous? It is true of every asp. Is man born unto trouble as the sparks fly upward? None, then, escape trouble. Does he die and waste away? There is no discharge, then, in that war.

When it is demanded, then, what is man, that he should be clean, or he that is born of a woman, that he should be righteous, it is a positive declaration that man is not clean, is not righteous — as a natural consequence of his birth. He possesses strength, and intelligence, and memory, and will, and affections, and appetites and passions, as the result of the constitution with which he is born. But moral purity — righteousness — it is expressly declared, is not, like these, the consequence of natural birth.

The *world* is another generic term by which the human race is characterized; and always in a manner which excludes the supposition of religion as being the first or natural character of man. We know that we (Christians) are of God,—that is, are born of God,—and the whole world lieth in wickedness. “He (Christ) was in the world, and the world knew him not.” “O, righteous Father, the world hath not known thee.” “Know ye not that the friendship of the world is enmity with God?” “If the world hate you, ye know that it hated me before it hated you.” “I have given them thy word, and the world hath hated them.” “If ye (my disciples) were of the world, the world would love his own; but because ye are not of the world, but I have chosen you out of the world, therefore the world hateth you.” In these passages the world is contrasted with the pious; and both together, like the ancient terms Jew and Gentile, include all men. There is no middle class, which belongs neither to the pious nor to the world. But the world is described as

ignorant of God ; as alienated from God ; as opposed to Jesus Christ, and his cause and people ; as lying in wickedness ; as dead in trespasses and sins. Is this the description of a race whose first accountable character is that of loyalty to God ?

The term *flesh* is also a generic term, descriptive of man in his native state. "My Spirit shall not always strive with man, for that (or because) he also is *flesh*." His being an animal furnished no reason, surely, why the Spirit of God should not strive with him. It is his moral nature, therefore, which is called flesh ; and which is described in other places as alienated from God, and as lusting against the Spirit ; furnishing an obvious reason why the Spirit might abandon man. In his discourse with Nicodemus, our Saviour speaks of the *flesh* as being that *moral* nature of man which is the consequence of his natural birth. "That which is born of the flesh is flesh, and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit." Our Saviour would not surely undertake to convince Nicodemus that the animal body is flesh. Flesh and spirit are therefore moral qualities contrasted : the one, forming the first character of man ; the other, the result of a special interposition of the divine Spirit. The one disqualifying, and the other fitting, a man for the kingdom of heaven. The one, intending that moral nature of man which renders regeneration indispensable ; the other, that holy nature which is produced by the Spirit of God, when he renews the heart.

The flesh is in other places described as the comprehensive principle of moral evil in man ; as the Spirit is described as being the efficient cause of all good. The works of the flesh are adultery, fornication, idolatry, hatred, seditions, heresies, envyings, murders, drunkenness, revellings, and such like : but the fruits of the Spirit are love, joy, peace, long-suffering,

gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, and temperance. The flesh comprehends the depravity which remains in the Christian after he is renewed. "I know that in me, that is, in my flesh, dwelleth no good thing." All my goodness is the result of regeneration; all my sin, the remains of my corrupt nature, called the flesh. "The flesh lusteth against the spirit, and the spirit against the flesh; and these are contrary the one to the other, so that ye cannot do the things that ye would." The flesh, then, being the first character of man, and the comprehensive principle of evil in him, is so described as to preclude the possibility of religion as the characteristic of his first moral nature. For the carnal or fleshly mind is "enmity against God." To be carnally minded is death; and they that are in the flesh cannot please God; and they that live after the flesh shall die.

IX. ALL THOSE TERMS WHICH DIVIDE THE RACE OF MAN INTO TWO GREAT MORAL DIVISIONS, IMPLY THAT NOT A RELIGIOUS, BUT A DEPRAVED CHARACTER, IS FIRST SUSTAINED. Such are the righteous and the wicked, the holy and the unholy, the godly and the ungodly, the just and the unjust. That these terms of contrast include all men is certain. From the nature of free agency, and from the declaration of God, we know that neutrality cannot exist among accountable beings. Where men are qualified to obey, and love is required, neutrality would be disobedience. To regard God, as compared with the creature, with indifference, would be adding insult to rebellion. But such a state of mind is impossible. No man can serve two masters, nor be indifferent towards them. He will love or hate, obey or despise. All men, then, are holy or unholy, righteous or wicked. But which is the first character sustained by man? Not the holy, but the unholy. There is no intimation in the Bible

that men become unholy by any change from good to bad; but Christians are continually described as becoming holy by a change from bad to good. They are begotten again. They are born of God. They are created anew. They are raised from the dead. The old man is put off, and the new man is put on. By all this variety of language it is implied that the sinful nature of man is first, and that his holy nature is the result of a special divine interposition.

X. THE AVOWED OBJECT OF THE DEATH OF CHRIST DECIDES THAT MANKIND ARE NOT RELIGIOUS BY NATURE. His death was rendered necessary by a character sustained by all men. And what was the character sustained, which awakened the compassion of God, and called from heaven his only-begotten Son to die for man? It was that of alienation from God. Herein is the love of Christ commended, in that while we were yet enemies he died for us. He suffered, the just for the unjust. "He died for all;" but it was because they "were all dead." In accordance with these representations, men are addressed by the Gospel as *dead*; and are commanded to arise from the dead,—as blind; and are commanded to see,—as wicked; and are commanded to forsake their wicked way, and turn to God. They are addressed as impenitent; and are called upon to repent—as in unbelief; and are commanded to believe. Every condition of pardon proposed to men in the Gospel, implies that they do not by nature possess it. The apostles, in their great commission, were directed to address every creature as impenitent; and Paul, in particular, was sent to the heathen, to open their eyes, and to turn them from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan to the living God.

When men obey the Gospel, they are described as renewed,—as reconciled,—as sustaining new affections. Old things

are passed away ; behold all things are become new. The entire Christian character is described in the Bible as the work of the Spirit. The fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, faith, &c. But the Spirit operates only in the application of the redemption purchased by Christ, in carrying into effect the objects of his death. Before he renews the hearts of the men for whom Christ died, they are therefore enemies, unjust, and dead in sin.

Those who reject the Gospel, and perish, are represented as sustaining their own original character ; as despising the riches of the goodness of God, and, after their hard and impenitent heart, treasuring up wrath ; as refusing when the Saviour called, and disregarding when he stretched out his hand. In short, men are described as becoming wicked as a consequence of the fall of Adam, and religious as the consequence, and only as the consequence, of the interposition of Jesus Christ, and the renewing of the Holy Ghost.

XI. IT IS DECLARED IN DIRECT TERMS, EXPRESSLY AND UNEQUIVOCALLY, THAT MANKIND ARE NOT RELIGIOUS IN THEIR FIRST CHARACTER.

“The Lord looked down from heaven upon the children of men, to see if there were any that did understand and seek God.” To know and to seek God, implies religion. This investigation, therefore, was instituted to decide the question whether there was an individual of the human race who was religious by nature. Not whether any had returned, of those who had gone astray,—for of such we read in the context, and throughout the Bible,—but to ascertain whether there were any of the race of man who had never turned away from God, but remained, like Abdiel, “faithful among the faithless.” The result of this omniscient scrutiny is, “They are all gone aside ; they are all together become filthy ; there is

none that doeth good ; no, not one." This is the declaration of God concerning the children of men : the result of an omniscient investigation, made expressly to decide whether the effects of the fall were universal, or whether any religious affection remained. The apostle Paul quotes this declaration of the Most High to prove, and he says that it does prove, "both Jews and Gentiles" (terms which then included all men), "that they are all under sin." But to be under sin is to be under its dominion, and under condemnation ; for he proves the fact, that all are under sin, to cut off the hope of justification by the deeds of the law, and to establish the doctrine of justification by faith. But to be under the dominion of sin, and in an *unjustified* condition, is surely inconsistent with the existence of religion. To corroborate his argument, the apostle quotes the following passage from the Old Testament, and he quotes it that every mouth may be stopped, and the whole world become guilty before God. "Their throat is an open sepulchre ; with their tongues they have used deceit ; the poison of asps is under their lips ; whose mouth is full of cursing and bitterness ; their feet are swift to shed blood ; destruction and misery are in their ways ; and the way of peace have they not known ; there is no fear of God before their eyes." Now, abate from this passage as much as is possible on the ground of metaphor, yet, as it is quoted in a regular argument to stop every mouth, and to prove the whole world guilty before God, it does most certainly exclude the supposition of piety in those who are thus characterized. An open sepulchre is not the place of life ; the poison of asps is not an emblem of health ; and cursing and bitterness are not the fruits of the Spirit ; nor are destruction and misery found in the ways of wisdom ; nor can it ever be said of the truly pious that they have no fear of God before

their eyes. Language is of no use, and inspiration affords no evidence of truth, if these terms, applied to stop every mouth and prove the whole world guilty before God, do not prove that man is not religious by nature.

XII. THERE IS ALSO IN THE SCRIPTURES MUCH INFERENCE ON THIS SUBJECT. If man, in his first character, is religious, we should expect that the fact would be implied in all the doctrines of the Bible; and if he is not religious, that such a fact would also be implied. The difference is so great that the same doctrines cannot be alike true on either supposition. But to which of the two suppositions are the doctrines of the Bible accommodated? If man is not religious by nature, we should expect to find the necessity of a great moral change inculcated in the Bible. And do we not find it? "Except a man be born again he cannot see the kingdom of God." We should expect to find Christians described as those who had experienced this great change: and thus they are described as born of God, created anew, and passed from death unto life. As there can be no medium between religion and irreligion, we should expect the change would be sudden. And do not all the terms which describe it imply that it is sudden? It is a creation. Is there a point of time in the process of creation in which a substance is neither in being nor out of being? It is a resurrection from the dead. Is there a moment in which the body is neither dead nor alive? If all men in the beginning withhold from God the homage of the heart, we should expect they would continue to do so, until reclaimed by a divine interposition. And thus we read of those who received Christ, that they were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of man, *but of God*.

If religion in man is the result of a divine interposition, we

should expect to find it described as an act of grace which God might grant, or withhold, according to his good pleasure. And do we not read that he hath mercy on whom he will have mercy? If men are without religion, we should expect that they would be required to give the heart to God, and repent, and believe immediately, and that those who perished would be represented as self-destroyers. And is it not so? "Repent, believe on the Lord Jesus Christ." "To-day, if ye will hear his voice, harden not your hearts." And do not all who perish under the light of the Gospel perish by neglecting the great salvation? "Turn ye, for why will ye die?" "I have called, and ye have refused." "This is the condemnation, that light is come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light."

If men are not religious in their first character, we should expect to find all their actions charged with sinful defect. And in accordance with this expectation we read, "The sacrifice of the wicked is an abomination to the Lord." "The ploughing of the wicked is sin." "So then they that are in the flesh cannot please God." And "without faith it is impossible to please him."

In conclusion of the argument, I have only to add, that if the first accountable character of man is a religious character, this entire body of evidence must be reversed. All men must be conscious of supreme love to God in early life; and conviction of sin and a moral renovation must be confined to those who have lost their religion; while the great body of Christians must be supposed to be such without the consciousness of any change. At the same time, the history of the world must be held to be a history of the fruits of piety,—idolatry itself being only an aberration of religious affection in children emulous to please their heavenly

Father! It should, moreover, be found written upon the unerring page, "Every imagination of man's heart is *good* from his youth. The children of men have *not* gone out of the way. There is none who *doth not* understand and seek God, and do good; no, not one. The heart of the sons of men is full of *goodness*, out of which proceed *holy* thoughts, benevolent deeds, chastity, truth, and reverence for God. What, therefore, is man, that he should be *wicked*? or he that is born of a woman, that he should *not* be religious? How *lovely* and pure is man, who drinketh in *righteousness* like water! This is the *approbation*, that *darkness* is come into the world, and men have loved *light* more than darkness, because their deeds are *good*. The whole world lieth in *righteousness*. He [Christ] was in the world, and the world *knew* him. O, righteous Father, the world hath *known* thee. The friendship of the world is *friendship with God*. If the world hath loved you, ye know that it loved *me* before it loved you. Be ye, therefore, *conformed* to the world, and be ye *not transformed* by any renewing of your mind. My Spirit shall *always* strive with man, because *he* is spirit. For that which is born of the *flesh* is *spirit*. Marvel not that I say unto you ye *must not* be born again. For the works of the *flesh* are *love, joy, peace, faith*; and the fruits of the Spirit are love, joy, peace, faith. In me,—that is, in my flesh,—dwelleth *every* good thing. Jesus Christ came to seek and to save those who were *not* lost, and he died *not* for his enemies—*not* the just for the unjust." The Gospel demands of men *no new character*; and all the doctrines of the Bible imply the early and universal piety of the human family.

And now who is prepared thus to reverse the whole testimony of experience, of history, and of the holy Scriptures?

In view of such overwhelming evidence to the contrary, will any man pretend to believe that mankind are religious by nature?

If you had as much evidence that your water was poisoned as you have that the heart of man by nature is not holy, would you drink it? Were the proof as clear that an assassin would meet you on turning a corner, would you go thither? Were it proved by as various and conclusive evidence that the fire was kindling on your dwelling, would you compose yourself to sleep? Will you, then, in opposition to such evidence, still endeavor to persuade yourself of the native goodness of the human heart? If it were merely the body whose life was threatened by the deception, I might still cry earnestly to you to beware; but it is your *soul*, and your future and eternal well-being, which you put in jeopardy by setting at naught such evidence. Without religion you cannot be admitted to heaven, and would not enjoy heaven if you were admitted. Without religion you can neither keep the law nor obey the Gospel, and cannot escape the condemnation which rests upon transgression and unbelief. Will you, then, shut your eyes against light, and stop your ears against admonition? It is but for a moment, compared with eternity, that you can thus deceive yourself, and cry Peace. The overwhelming consciousness must soon press upon your amazed heart, that you are without holiness and cannot see the Lord, and that the harvest is past, the summer ended, and you not saved. There is no hope in your case while you think your heart is good, and feel no need of a divine renovation. They that are whole need not the physician, but they that are sick; and Jesus Christ came to call, not the righteous, but sinners, to repentance. While the delusion prevails that you are rich, and stand in

need of nothing, you will reject the counsel of Christ, to apply to him for eye-salve that you may see, and for white raiment to cover the shame of your nakedness. You will do nothing to save your own soul, and God will do nothing to save it, while, under the concentrated light of evidence, you remain wilfully ignorant of your malady, and wilfully negligent of your only remedy. Admit, then, the painful, alarming fact, that you have no religion, and without delay commence the inquiry what you must do to be saved, and thus escape the coming wrath, and lay hold on eternal life. All men who are now in heaven were once, like you, without God, and without Christ, and without hope; and all who are now on earth, strangers and pilgrims seeking a better country, were once, like you, without religion. But He who commanded the light to shine out of darkness has shined in their hearts, and the same blessed Spirit is able and willing to enlighten you; but you must confess, and not cover your sin; you must come to the light, and not shun it; you must be convinced of sin, of righteousness, and of a judgment to come; you must be born again, or you cannot see the kingdom of God.

SERMON III.

THE NATIVE CHARACTER OF MAN.

“Every one that loveth is born of God.” — 1 JOHN 4 : 7.

THE preceding discourse furnishes a Scriptural account of human depravity. It is comprehended in the fact that men have naturally no religion. If this has not been proved, we must abandon our confidence in the power of language to express ideas, and of evidence to prove matters of fact.

All which is admirable in intellect, or monitory in conscience, or comprehensive in knowledge, or refined in taste, or delicate in sensibility, or tender in natural affection, may be found in man, as the result of constitution, or the effect of intellectual and moral culture ; but religion is not found, except as a result of the divine interposition. The temple is beautiful, but it is a temple in ruin. This depravity of man, implied in his destitution of religion, may be described briefly in the following particulars :

I. THIS DEPRAVITY OF MAN, COMPREHENDED IN HIS DESTITUTION OF RELIGION, IS VOLUNTARY.

A depraved nature is by many understood to mean a constitutional nature, sinful prior to choice, and producing sinful choice by an unavoidable necessity, as fountains of water pour forth their bitter streams, or trees produce their bitter fruit.

The mistake lies in a virtual implication that the nature

of matter and mind are the same ; whereas they are entirely different. The nature of matter excludes powers of perception, understanding and choice. But the nature of accountable mind includes them all.

Neither a holy or a depraved nature in the strict sense is possible, without acts of understanding, conscience and choice. To say of an accountable creature that he has a depraved nature, is to say that, rendered capable by his Maker of obedience, he disobeys from the commencement of his accountable agency.

To us it does not belong to say when accountability and actual sin commence, and to what extent they exist in the early stages of life ; this is the prerogative of the omniscient God. Doubtless there is a time when every man does become personally accountable, and the law of God obligatory. And what we have proved is, that, whenever the time arrives that it becomes the duty of man to love God more than the creature, he does in fact love the creature more than God,—does freely and wickedly set his affections on things below, and refuse to set them upon things above. For this universal concurrence of men in preferring the creature to the Creator, there is doubtless some cause or reason ; but it cannot be a cause of which disobedience is an involuntary and unavoidable result. Ability to obey is indispensable to moral obligation ; and the moment any cause should render love to God impossible, that moment the obligation to love would cease, and man would no more have a depraved nature than any other animal. A depraved nature in the strict sense can no more exist without voluntary agency and accountability, than a material nature could exist without solidity and extension.

Whatever effect, therefore, the fall of man may have had

on his race, it has not had the effect to render it impossible for man to love God. And whatever may be the early constitution of man, there is nothing in it and nothing withheld from it, which renders disobedience unavoidable and obedience impossible.

The first actual sin in every man might have been and ought to have been avoided, as really as any subsequent sin. At the time, whenever it is, when it first becomes the duty of a man to be religious and he refuses; it is in the possession of such faculties and such knowledge as render religion a reasonable service, and him inexcusable and justly punishable. The supreme love of the world is a matter of choice, formed under such circumstances as that the man might have chosen otherwise, and ought to have chosen otherwise, and is therefore exposed to punishment for his voluntary and inexcusable disobedience. If, therefore, man has a depraved nature, in the strict sense, it is a voluntary and accountable nature, which is depraved, as exercised in disobedience to the law of God.*

This is in accordance with the Bible. "They are all gone aside." "They are all gone out of the way." Each man has been voluntary and active in his transgressions. "There is none that doeth good; no, not one." "Every imagination of the thoughts of his heart is only evil continually." "And even as they did not like to retain God in their knowledge, God gave them over to a reprobate mind." "The fool hath said in his heart there is no God."

*I do not deny the existence of a nature so affected by the fall, even before action, that it uniformly leads to sin, and is therefore in a proper, though loose and popular sense, called depraved and sinful,—that is, leading to sin. This point is fully explained in the trial that follows.

II. THE DEPRAVITY OF MAN, IMPLIED IN HIS DESTITUTION OF RELIGION, IS POSITIVE DEPRAVITY.

Multitudes are willing to admit the fact that they have no religion, who are by no means convinced that they are in a state of positive opposition to God. They are not conscious of it. They have a reverence for God, and for his mercies some gratitude; and desire, they think, to be religious, and do many things with the hope of becoming such.

But the transgression of the law is voluntary and positive transgression. Not to love when God commands it, is disobedience, and not to repent and believe when these duties are commanded, is rebellion against God.

But, can a subject disobey the fundamental laws of the government under which he lives, and not be opposed to the government, and positively wicked? And can a man disobey in his heart the law of God and His Gospel, and not be positively opposed to his Maker and Redeemer? The divine requirement is, "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God;" and the man who has no religion refuses. The prohibition is, "Thou shalt have no other gods before me;" but the man without religion, in defiance of this prohibition, does love the creature more than God. Is not this positive disobedience? Were a course of action persisted in which God forbids, that would be counted positive disobedience. But the obedience of the heart is of all others the most appreciated, and the disobedience of the heart of all others regarded as most evil. Some have admitted that they do not love God supremely, but have insisted that neither are they opposed to God. But this neutral state, if it were possible, would be adding insult to disobedience; for the command is, Thou shalt not be indifferent — "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart." Now, what greater insult can be offered to the glo-

rious God than to refuse him our *preference*, and hang in equilibrium between the attractions of his infinite glory and the influence of a perishing world? But neutrality between such objects as God and the world is impossible. It is the nature of mind to choose, if not prevented by force; as much as it is of matter to be quiescent, if not moved by external powers. To prefer the world, or God, is the unavoidable result of free agency. Not to choose at all, is the attribute of a stock or a stone, but not of a rational, accountable being. Nor is there any practical indication of neutrality. For whatever reverence a man may feel for God, and whatever external respect he may pay to him, his own consciousness will decide, and his course of conduct will confirm the decision, that his affections are set on things below, and his sources of enjoyment are found, not in God, but in the things of time. Here, then, the great law of the kingdom of God is violated by all who are without religion. But can the fundamental laws of a government be violated, without opposition to that government?

This view which we have given of the mind, as excluding neutrality, is confirmed by the Bible. "No man can serve two masters." "He that is not with me is against me." "The friendship of the world is enmity with God." Hence, according to the Bible, all men are positively holy or unholy, just or unjust, righteous or wicked, godly or ungodly, penitent or impenitent, believers or unbelievers, in a state of pardon or of condemnation. Therefore the depravity of the man who is destitute of religion is positive depravity.

III. THE DEPRAVITY OF MAN, WHICH IS IMPLIED IN HIS DESTITUTION OF RELIGION, IS GREAT. Many suppose that, although they are not religious, they are not great sinners. Provided they are amiable and conscientious in their moral

deportment, and useful in their lives, they cannot conceive that God should have much reason to be displeased with them. If they had been guilty of great actual crimes, they would be ready to admit that they were great sinners. But so long as the chief that can be said against them is that they are not Christians; *this*, if it be a crime at all, is so common, and results (as they think) so much from unavoidable necessity, as almost to take away guilt, and leave a fair balance of good deeds and virtues to recommend them to God.

Far different from this is Heaven's estimation of the guilt of being without religion. According to the Bible, whenever it becomes the duty of man to love God, it is a duty of the highest obligation, the violation of which constitutes criminality of the highest order. The Being who demands love is worthy; the beings of whom he demands it are able to love; and the affections of his creatures belong to HIM. He claims them as his right, and declares that he is robbed when they are withheld. The highest good of his subjects, for time and eternity, is found in giving their hearts to HIMSELF; and ruin is the consequence of refusal. The obligation to love according to the law is, therefore, superlatively great. It is also constant; so that the sinfulness of man is great in its nature and great in its amount, for it is the violation, constantly, of the highest possible obligation. And, when this is done by those who are favored with the Gospel, their sin is immensely aggravated by the consideration of all that God has done to save them from death. They have perverted the means of grace, the mercies of his Providence, and the judgments of his rod; they have despised the riches of his goodness, and the fierceness of his wrath; they have trodden under foot the blood of his Son, and done despite to the Spirit of his grace. And is all this criminality of a low degree and small amount,

and so neutralized by human inability as to be more than balanced by amiable dispositions and good actions? As God views the subject, those who do not love him are sinful to an astonishing degree. "Hear, O heavens, and give ear, O earth! for the Lord hath spoken,—I have nourished and brought up children, and they have rebelled against me!"

IV. THE DEPRAVITY OF MAN, IMPLIED IN HIS DESTITUTION OF RELIGION, IS ENTIRE. Most men who admit that they have no religion, resist the conclusion that they are therefore *entirely* depraved. But, to decide the point, we have only to ascertain in what purity of heart, or holiness, consists, and whether a man who has no religion possesses it. Purity of heart, or holiness, consists in *conformity of heart to the law of God*, and includes, of course, *supreme love to God*. He, therefore, who has not supreme love to God, possesses no such affections of heart towards God as the law requires; and, so far as his heart is concerned, his depravity is entire. And as to actions, however correct in form they may be, they cannot, without holiness of heart, be regarded as obedience. The entireness of human depravity, therefore, consists in the constant voluntary refusal of man to love the Lord his God with supreme complacency and good-will. It is in him all evil and no good.

V. THE VIEW WE HAVE TAKEN OF THE CHARACTER OF MAN, AS DESTITUTE OF RELIGION, ILLUSTRATES BOTH THE NATURE AND THE NECESSITY OF REGENERATION. The language of the Bible is clear and forcible on this subject; but it is claimed by many, that, as there is no such moral defect in man as lays a foundation for the necessity of a universal moral change, those passages which might seem to teach it must be restricted, and understood to teach only the necessity of conversion from Paganism or Judaism to Christianity, or a

reformation of life. But the course of evidence in these discourses has disclosed a universal and appalling moral defect in man, which renders just such a change necessary as the language of the Bible indicates, according to its most direct and obvious import. To be without religion is to be *dead in sin*; and to be so renewed by the Spirit as to love God supremely, is to be *raised from the dead, and born of God*. This is the change without which no man can see the kingdom of God.

This change, so indispensable, must also be a *perceptible* change. The attention to the means of grace, and growing seriousness and solicitude which precede it, are progressive, as is the subsequent increase of holiness and evidence of the change. But the change itself from selfishness to holiness — from supreme love of the world to supreme love of God — is not a progressive, but an instantaneous change. This accords with the representations of the Bible. It is a new creation, a resurrection from the dead, &c. I do not say that every Christian perceives, at the time, the moment of transition; or that, perceiving that a change of some kind has taken place, he perceives at once the evidence that it is a saving change. Not unfrequently days and weeks may pass away before he will dare to hope; and sometimes the truly pious, from a misapprehension of their evidence, may for years be afflicted with doubts and fears concerning their state. But that the change is real, and great, and instantaneous, when a sinner, who has loved the world supremely, first sets his affections on things above, is self-evident. It would be ridiculous, in the relations of life, to talk of unperceived affection for a father or mother, husband or wife; and equally absurd is the supposition of loving God more than the world, without the occurrence of any perceptible change.

There is, I am aware, a general feeling that men are not quite prepared to die without becoming better. But this emendation, it is thought by many, is to be attained gradually, by moral culture, and imperceptibly, as the grass grows by rain and sunshine. Any great solicitude, or deep conviction of sin, or sudden peace and joy, it is supposed, are not to be expected, but deprecated as delusion. And some professed Christians, and even ministers, warn their friends not to be alarmed, and not to expect any sudden and happy change in their views and affections. But if there be with every man a time when he is not religious, there must be a time when he becomes religious. Even were religion the result of natural principles duly cultivated, there must be a time when cultivation has produced its results. If it were produced by the cultivation of some low degrees of goodness in man, still there must be a time when it reaches to the degree of goodness which constitutes religion. Or if, as the Scriptures teach, there is no religion in the heart of man by nature, then there must be a moment of time when its existence in the heart begins. For that which once had no existence, and comes into being, must have a beginning. There is no medium between existence and non-existence, in matter, mind or morals; no moment in which a thing is neither created nor uncreated, neither in existence nor out of existence.

It is absurd to speak of love as in a process of gradual formation; for what is half-formed love, repentance, faith, or any other trait of Christian character? How long must culture operate, to produce the simple and indivisible emotion of love to God? And if the obedience of love must be gradual, and cannot be instantaneous, how is it that the requirements of Heaven should so disregard this constitution of mind, as to

command man immediately to love and repent, and warn him of growing hardness of heart as the consequence of delay? As all men, then, are destitute of religion by nature, its commencement in the soul is at all times sudden. There is a moment when he who loved the world more than God begins to love God more than the world. He may not in a moment see it, but God sees it.

You have now before you the evidence that men are not religious by nature; and that this destitution implies the universal and entire depravity of man, and the necessity of a great and sudden change in the affections, by the special influence of the Holy Spirit. This is not a matter of abstract speculation, of no practical utility. Our being and accountability are eternal; and the law of God, which is the rule of obligation, is eternal. Heaven is a religious world, and the present is our state, and our only state, of probation and preparation for heaven. Here, in this morning of our being, the elements are formed of an immutable character in the eternal state; and if that which is first formed is one that unfits us for heaven, and fits us for destruction, can we too soon or too clearly perceive it, or too deeply feel it, or too earnestly strive to be conformed in our affections to the requirements of the Gospel, to the conditions of pardon, and to the exigencies of the heavenly state? What, then, is the improvement which you will make of these discourses, whose hearts tell you that you have no religion? Will you say that these are *hard sayings*, and that you do not like such doctrine? But is it therefore untrue, because it is painful? And will you, dare you, in the presence of such evidence, reject it, in favor of the dictates of mere inclination? Will you apply for comfort to such as endeavor to explain away this evidence, and speak to you smooth things, and prophesy

deceits? Beware! others before you have done this, and “God sent them strong delusions, that they might believe a lie, because they had no pleasure in the truth, but had pleasure in unrighteousness.” You may persuade yourself, or be persuaded, that a change of heart is not necessary to prepare you for death and heaven; and yet,

“This fearful truth will still remain,
The sinner must be born again,
Or drink the wrath of God.”

Do you then, at length, inquire what you must do to be saved? The answer is plain,—Repent, and you shall be forgiven; believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and you shall be saved. Neglect, then, the subject no longer. Resolve that from this time you will make the salvation of your soul your first and great concern. Break off your alliance with vain persons and diverting amusements; read your Bible daily and earnestly, alone; and lift up your cry to God, in earnest supplication for mercy. Plead guilty, and cry for pardon through a Redeemer’s blood!

DR. BEECHER'S TRIAL FOR HERESY :

BEFORE THE PRESBYTERY OF CINCINNATI, JUNE, 1835.

INTRODUCTORY NOTE.

The statement of my trial for heresy, at the West, in 1835, which follows, is substantially as reported for the *New York Observer*, at the time, from the sittings of the Presbytery of Cincinnati ; with the incorporation of my defence, in the maturer form which it took in my " Views of Theology," subsequently published, at the request of the Synod.

L. B.

THE Presbytery of Cincinnati, to which Dr. Beecher belonged, held an adjourned meeting in that city, on Tuesday, the 9th of June, 1835. The Court consisted of the following members, namely :

MINISTERS.—J. L. Wilson, D.D., Lyman Beecher, D.D.,* Andrew S. Morison, Daniel Hayden, Francis Monfort, Thomas J. Biggs,† Ludwell G. Gaines, Sayres Gasley, Benjamin Graves (clerk), Artemas Bullard, John Burt, F. Y. Vail, Thomas Brainerd, A. T. Rankin, Calvin E. Stowe‡ (moderator), Augustus Pomroy, George Beecher, Adrien Atôn, E. Slack.

* Professor of Theology,

† Professor of Ecclesiastical History, } in Lane Seminary.

‡ Professor of Languages,

RULING ELDERS. — William Skillinger, J. G. Burnet, Adam S. Walker, Simon Hageman, Peter H. Kemper, Andrew Harvey, William Cumback, Robert Porter, John Archard, Henry Hageman, A. B. Andrews, Israel Brown, Bryce R. Blair, Wm. Carey, J. C. Tunis, J. Lyon, J. D. Low, T. Mitchell, W. Owen, A. P. Bradley, S. Woodbury.

The Presbytery was constituted with prayer; when a sermon was delivered by the Rev. Calvin E. Stowe, from Phil. 3 : 16,—“Whereto we have already attained, let us walk by the same rule, let us mind the same thing.”

The Rev. Dr. Wilson had, at a previous meeting of Presbytery, brought forward certain charges against the Rev. Dr. Beecher, and the present meeting had been appointed to consider and try the accusations; citations had been issued, and the requisite steps taken to prepare the case for trial.

The charges were then read, as follows :

CHARGES OF WILSON *v.* BEECHER.

November 11, 1834.

To the Moderator and Members of the Presbytery of Cincinnati :

DEAR BRETHREN : It is known to the Trustees of Lane Seminary, and to some of the members of Presbytery, that, after the appointment of the Rev. Lyman Beecher, D.D., to the Professorship which he now holds, in that Institution, I more than once expressed an opinion that he would not accept of the appointment, because, as I thought, he could not, consistently with his views in theology, adopt the standards of the Presbyterian Church.

My opinion of Dr. Beecher's theology was then founded on my recollection of a conversation held with him in 1817, and his sermon published in 1827, entitled “The Native Character of Man.” When I heard that Dr. Beecher had entered the Presbyterian Church, without *adopting her standards*, I was surprised, grieved and alarmed. When he was received by the Presbytery of Cincinnati from the 3d Presbytery of New York, I was in the moderator's chair, and was denied the privilege of protesting against his admission, because, it was said, I had no right to protest in a case in which I had no right to vote. Afterwards it was seen, by publications in

different periodicals, that the soundness of Dr. Beecher's theology was called in question, and this Presbytery was called upon to take up charges against him on the ground of general rumor. But the common fame was denied to exist, and the call was unheeded. Subsequently the sermon of Dr. Beecher on "Dependence and Free Agency" was circulated, and highly commended. This Presbytery was then called upon to appoint a committee to examine some of the Doctor's sermons, and report whether they contained doctrines at variance with the standards of our Church. This call was disregarded also. Complaint was made to the Synod of Cincinnati, and they said the Presbytery could be compelled to take up charges only by a responsible prosecutor. Being more and more grieved and alarmed, I carried the matter up by appeal to the last General Assembly. This appeal was cast out by the judicial committee, because, it was said, that I was not one of the original parties. Had I called my appeal a complaint, it would have been tried.

Two facts have made this subject recently flagrant :

1. The public commendation of Dr. Beecher's theology by Perfectionists.

2. Some of the Perfectionists have been inmates of Lane Seminary.

In view of these things, and believing that Dr. Beecher has contributed greatly to the propagation of dangerous doctrines, I feel it my duty to bring charges against him before this Presbytery.

I. I charge Dr. Beecher with propagating doctrines contrary to the Word of God, and the standards of the Presbyterian Church, on the subject of the depraved nature of man.

SPECIFICATIONS. — The Scriptures and our standards teach, on the subject of a depraved nature ;

1. That a corrupted nature is conveyed to all the posterity of Adam, descending from him by ordinary generation.

2. That from original corruption all actual transgressions proceed.

3. That all the natural descendants of Adam are conceived and born in sin.

4. That original sin binds the descendants of Adam over to the wrath of God.

5. That the fall of Adam brought upon mankind the loss of communion with God, so as we are by nature children of wrath, and bound slaves to Satan. Conf. F., ch. vi., secs. 3, 4, 6. Larg. Cat., Ans. to Q. 26, 27. Vide Scrip. proofs, and Short. Cat., A. to Q. 18.

In opposition to this, Dr. Beecher teaches ;

1. That the depravity of man is voluntary.
2. That neither a depraved or holy nature are possible, without understanding, conscience and choice.
3. That a depraved nature cannot exist without a voluntary agency.
4. That, whatever may be the early constitution of man, there is nothing in it, and nothing withheld from it, which renders disobedience unavoidable.
5. That the first sin in every man is free, and might have been and ought to have been avoided.
6. That if man is depraved by nature, it is a voluntary nature that is depraved.
7. That this is according to the Bible. "They go astray as soon as they be born," — that is, in early life ; how early, so as to deserve punishment for actual sin, God only knows. — Vide Sermon on Native Character of man, pp. 72, 73, 74.

II. I charge Dr. Beecher with propagating doctrines contrary to the Word of God, and the standards of the Presbyterian Church, on the subjects of Total Depravity and the work of the Holy Spirit in effectual calling.

SPECIFICATIONS. — The Scriptures and our standards teach, on the subject of total depravity ;

1. That, by the sin of our first parents, all their natural descendants are dead in sin, and wholly defiled in all the faculties of soul and body.
2. That, by this original corruption, they are utterly disabled, and made opposite to all good.
3. That a natural man, being dead in sin, is not able, by his own strength, to convert himself, or prepare himself thereto.
4. That no man is able, either of himself or by any grace received in this life, perfectly to keep the commandments of God. — Conf., ch. vi., secs. 2, 4. Ch. ix., sec. 3. Larg. Cat., A. to Q. 25, 149, 190. Short. Cat., A. to Q. 101, 103, and Scripture proofs.

In opposition to this, Dr. Beecher teaches ;

1. That man is rendered capable by his Maker of obedience.
2. That ability to obey is indispensable to moral obligation.
3. That where there is a want of ability to love God, obligation to love ceases, whatever may be the cause.
4. That the sinner is able to do what God commands, and what, being done, would save the soul.
5. That to be able and unwilling to obey God is the only possible way in

which a free agent can become deserving of condemnation and punishment.

6. That there is no position which unites more universally and entirely the suffrages of the whole human race than the necessity of a capacity for obedience to the existence of obligation and desert of punishment.

7. That no obligation can be created, without a capacity commensurate with the demand.

8. That ability commensurate with requirement is the equitable foundation of the moral government of God.

9. That this has been the received doctrine of the Orthodox Church in all ages.

Vide Sermons on Native Character, and Dependence and Free Agency, pp. 73, 22, 23, 32, 36.

On the subject of total depravity, effectual calling, and the work of the Holy Spirit in the production of saving faith, the Scriptures and our standards teach ;

1. That fallen man is utterly disabled, and wholly defiled in all the faculties and parts of soul and body, and made opposite to all good, and wholly inclined to all evil, by original corruption.

2. That from this original corruption do proceed all actual transgressions.

3. That effectual calling is of God's free and special grace, and a work of God's Spirit ; that men are altogether passive therein, until, being quickened and renewed by the Holy Spirit, they are thereby enabled to answer this call.

4. That, having a new heart and a new spirit created in them, they are sanctified and enabled to believe.

5. That justifying faith is wrought in the heart of a sinner by the Spirit and Word of God, whereby he is convinced of his disability to recover himself.

Conf., ch. vi., secs. 1, 2, 4. Ch. x., sec. 2. Ch. xiii., sec. 1. Ch. xiv., sec. 1. Larg. Cat., Ans. to Quest. 72, and Scripture proofs.

In opposition to this, Dr. Beecher teaches ;

1. That man in his present state is able and only unwilling to do what God commands, and which, being done, would save the soul.

2. That the more clearly the light of conviction shines, the more distinct is a sinner's perception that he is not destitute of capacity, — that is, of ability to obey God.*

* Dr. Beecher uses the terms "natural capacity" and "natural ability" in the same sense. — (Dr. Wilson's note.)

3. That when the Holy Spirit comes to search out what is amiss, and put in order that which is out of the way, he finds no impediment to obedience to be removed, but only a perverted will ; and that all which he accomplishes in the day of his power is to make the sinner willing to submit to God.

4. That good men have supposed that they augment the evil of sin, and the justice, mercy and power of God, in exact proportion as they throw down the sinner into a condition of absolute impotency ; that he [Dr. Beecher] cannot perceive the wisdom of their views ; that a subject of God's government who can but will not obey might appear to himself much more guilty than one whose capacity of obedience had been wholly annihilated by the sin of Adam. — Sermons on Dependence and Free Agency, pp. 22, 31, 43.

III. I charge Dr. Beecher with propagating a doctrine of Perfection contrary to the standards of the Presbyterian church.

SPECIFICATIONS. — Our standards teach ;

1. That no man is able, neither of himself nor by grace received, to keep the commandments of God, but doth daily break them. — See Conf., ch. ix., sec. 3. Larger Cat., Ans. to Q. 149, and proof-texts.

In opposition to this, Dr. Beecher teaches ;

1. That the sinner is able to do what God commands ; that the Holy Spirit, in the day of his power, makes him willing, and so long as he is able and willing there can be no sin. — Sermon on Dependence and Free Agency, p. 22.

2. The Perfectionists have founded on Dr. Beecher's theory the following pinching argument :

“ Who does not know that theology, as renovated and redeemed from the contradictions and absurdities of former ages by such spirits as Beecher, Taylor, and their associates, forms the stepping-stone to Perfection ? Who, that can draw an obvious conclusion from established premises, but must see, at a glance, that Christian Perfection, substantially as we hold it, is the legitimate product of New England divinity ? We have been taught in their schools that sin lies wholly in the *will*, and that man, as a free agent, possesses adequate ability, independent of gracious aid, to render perfect obedience to the moral law ; in other words, to be a Perfectionist. They have established the theory that, by virtue of a *fixedness of purpose*, man is able to stand against the wiles of the devil, and *fully* to answer the end of his being. Now, if this system, which the opposers of the New School men were not able to gainsay, teaching man's ability, independent of gracious aid, to be perfect, to answer fully the end for which his Maker created

him,—if this be Orthodoxy, I ask, Is it heresy to affirm that, by virtue of aid from a risen Saviour, superadded to free moral agency, *THE THING IS DONE*? I see ‘no point of rest’ for the advocates of the New Divinity, short of the doctrine of Perfection. If they will not advance, they must go back, and adopt the inability system of their opponents, which they have so often and so ably demonstrated to be the climax of absurdity and folly.”—See Letter to Theodore D. Weld, member of Lane Theological Seminary, published in *The Perfectionist*, vol. 1., No. 1, August 20, 1834, by Whitmore & Buckingham, New Haven, Conn.

IV. I charge Dr. Beecher with the sin of slander, namely :

SPECIFICATION 1. — In belying the whole church of God.

The Doctor’s statements are these : “There is no position which unites more universally and entirely the suffrages of the whole human race than the necessity of a capacity for obedience to the existence of obligation and desert of punishment.” Again : “The doctrine of *man’s free agency* and natural ability, as the ground of obligation and guilt, has been the received doctrine of the Orthodox Church in all ages.” — Sermon “Dependence and Free Agency,” pp. 23 and 36.

SPECIFICATION 2. — In attempting to bring odium upon all who sincerely receive the standards of the Presbyterian Church, and to cast all the Reformers, previous to the time of Edwards, into the shade of ignorance and contempt.

Dr. Beecher says : “Doubtless the impression often made by their language (language of the Reformers) has been that of natural impotency ; and in modern days there may be those who have not understood the language of the Reformers, or of the Bible, on this subject ; and who verily believe that *both* teach that man has no ability, of any kind or degree, to do anything that is spiritually good, and that the rights of God to command and to punish survive the wreck and extinction in his subjects of the elements of accountability. Of such, if there be such in the church, we have only to say, that when, for the time, they ought to be teachers, they have need that some one should teach them which be the first principles of the oracles of God.”—Sermon “Dependence and Free Agency,” p. 41. Again :

“It must be admitted, however, that from the primitive age down to the time of Edwards, few saw this subject with clearness, or traced it with uniform precision and consistency. His appears to have been the mind that first rose above the mists which long hung over the subject.”—p. 41. Again :

“So far as the Calvinistic system, as expounded by Edwards and the

disciples of his school, prevailed, revivals prevailed, and heresy was kept back. And most notoriously it was 'dead orthodoxy' which opened the dikes, and let in the flood 'of Arminian and Unitarian heresy.' By attending to the whole passage, page 48, same sermon, the Presbytery will see that "dead orthodoxy," as the Doctor calls it, was the doctrine of man's natural impotency to obey the Gospel. — p. 48. The Doctor attempts to make us believe that, from the time of Edwards, the theory of this sermon has been, and now is, the received doctrine of the ministers and churches of New England. The truth of this I am not prepared to admit, bad as I think of the New England theologians in general; but I am not prepared to deny it. Be it so, — the matter is so much the worse. Again the Doctor proceeds, in his strain of calumny, — "Far the greater portion of the revivals of our land, it is well known, have come to pass under the auspices of Calvinism, as modified by Edwards and the disciples of his school, and under the inculcation of ability and obligation, and urgent exhortations of immediate repentance and submission to God; while congregations and regions over which natural impotency and dependence, and the impenitent use of means, and waiting God's time, have disclosed their tendencies, have remained, like Egypt, dark beside the land of Goshen; and like the mountain of Gilboa, on which there was no rain, nor fields of offering; and like the valley of vision, dead, dry, very dry." — p. 49.

And, to complete the climax, the Doctor adds: "No other obstruction to the success of the Gospel is so great, as the possession of the public mind by the belief of the natural and absolute inability of unconverted men. It has done more, I verily believe, to wrap in sackcloth the Sun of Righteousness, and perpetuate the shadow of death on those who might have been rejoicing in his light, than all errors beside. I cannot anticipate a greater calamity to the church than would follow its universal inculcation and adoption. And most blessed and glorious, I am confident, will be the result, when her ministry everywhere shall rightly understand and teach, and their hearers shall universally admit, the *full ability* of every sinner to comply with the terms of salvation." — p. 52.

Let the Presbytery compare all this with the history of the Church, and the doctrine of our standards on original sin, total depravity, the misery of the fall, regeneration, and effectual calling, and say whether there is an Arminian, or a Pelagian, or a Unitarian, in the land, who will not agree with Dr. Beecher, and admit "the full ability of every sinner to comply with the terms of salvation," and unite with him in considering it a calamity for the doctrines of our standards to be universally adopted!

V. I charge Dr. Beecher with the crime of preaching the same, and kindred doctrines, contained in these sermons, in the Second Presbyterian church, in Cincinnati.

VI. I charge Dr. Beecher with the sin of hypocrisy: I mean dissimulation in important religious matters.

SPECIFICATION 1. — If Dr. Beecher has entered the Presbyterian Church without adopting her standards, he is guilty of this sin. This I believe, because I am informed he was received as a member of the Third Presbytery of New York, without appearing before them; because he was received by the Presbytery of Cincinnati, without adopting our standards; and because the installation service does not require their adoption.

2. If Dr. Beecher has adopted our standards, he is guilty of this sin, because it is evident he disbelieves and impugns them on important points, subjects declared by himself to be of the utmost moment.

3. When Dr. Beecher's orthodoxy was in question, — I think before the Synod in the First Presbyterian church, — he made a popular declaration "that our confession of faith contained the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth," or words to that amount. I thought then, and still think, that it was dissimulation for popular effect. The crime is inferable from the circumstances of the case. If he has adopted the standards of our Church, as our form of government requires, it is competent for him to show when and where. But the charge of hypocrisy is equally sustained, in my estimation, whether he has or has not. He may take whichever alternative he can best defend.

4. When Dr. Beecher preached and published his sermon on Dependence and Free Agency, he was just about to enter the Presbyterian Church, with an expectation of being pastor of the Second Presbyterian Church of Cincinnati, and teacher of theology in Lane Seminary. He either did not *know* the doctrines of our Church, or, if he did know them, he designed to impugn and vilify those who honestly adopt them.

My witnesses to prove that he published the sermon in view of entering the Presbyterian Church are Dr. Woods, of Andover, and Prof. Stuart, Prof. Briggs, Robert Boal, Jabez C. Tunis, Augustus Moore, James McIntire and P. Skinner. The allegation respecting the Perfectionists, if denied, can be proven by their publication, from which I have made an extract. Charges 1, 2, 3 and 4, are sustained by Dr. Beecher's printed sermons on the 'Native Character of Man,' and on "Dependence and Free Agency," both of which are herewith submitted for examination.

If Dr. Beecher denies being the author of these sermons, published under

his name, the authorship can be proved by Rev. Austin Dickinson, Rev. Dr. Woods, of Andover, and Perkins & Marvin, of Boston, Mass. The witnesses to prove the 5th charge are Augustus Moore, Jephtha D. Ganst, John Sullivan, Robert Wallace, James McIntire, P. Skinner and James Hall, Esq.

The third specification under charge 6th I expect to prove, if it be denied, by the members of this Presbytery, including myself; but I will name Rev. Sayres Gazley, John Burt, L. G. Gaines, Daniel Hayden, and others.

And now, brethren, you will not forget that the Synod of Cincinnati have enjoined it upon you to exercise the discipline of the Church, even upon those who disturb her peace by new terms and phrases; much more are you bound to exercise it on those who destroy her purity by false doctrine, and vilify her true ministry.

In the case of Dr. Beecher, I send you an extract from the minutes of the Synod: "The Synod do not say that there are not sufficient reasons for the Presbytery to take up a charge or charges on common fame; but are fully of the opinion that, of *that*, Presbytery has full liberty to judge for themselves; and that they can be compelled to take up a charge only by a responsible prosecutor." An attested copy of their decision I herewith submit.

I feel it a solemn transaction to accuse any one, especially a professed minister of Jesus Christ. It is sometimes a duty to do this. The obligation in this case rests upon somebody, and I know of no one who will discharge it but myself. I have not consulted flesh and blood, but the interests of the Church of Jesus Christ, before whose judgment-seat we must all appear. I have counted the cost; and now call upon you, in presence of God, for your due deliberation and decision upon every charge submitted.

With all due regard, I am your brother in the Gospel of Christ,

J. L. WILSON.

Dr. BEECHER being called upon to answer, said: "I am not guilty of heresy; I am not guilty of slander; I am not guilty of hypocrisy or dissimulation in the respect charged. I do not say that I have not taught the doctrines charged; but I deny their being false doctrines. The course I shall take will be to justify."

The Moderator calling upon Dr. Beecher to say what

plea should be entered upon the minutes in his name, Dr. Beecher replied, "The plea of Not Guilty."

Dr. WILSON said he supposed Dr. Beecher took the proper distinction between facts and crimes. He admitted the facts specified, but denied the crimes charged. Dr. Wilson wished to know whether the admission extended to one of the facts respecting which no crime was charged, but which had been stated because it was closely connected and linked in with the other facts of the case, namely, that Dr. Beecher had declared before the Synod that the Confession of Faith of the Presbyterian Church contained the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth.

Dr. BEECHER replied that he should not admit the fact stated in that naked form; he would not admit the words quoted, without other words by which they had been accompanied.

Dr. WILSON then said that as to this point he should ask leave to adduce testimony.

A commission was then granted, to take the testimony of Professor Biggs, who was in feeble health, and unable to attend the court.

The Rev. SAYRES GASLEY was then duly sworn and examined, and his testimony having been taken down by the clerk and read to him, he approved the record as correct. It is as follows :

I remember the circumstance which occurred in Synod to which the charge alludes. The precise words contained in the specification I do not recollect. My impression seems clear that, in speaking of the Confession of Faith, Dr. Beecher said that it was true, every sentence and every word, and that he so believed it.

Question. — What were the circumstances under which the above declaration was made ?

Answer. — I cannot say positively, but, to the best of my belief, it was in Dr. Beecher's plea before Synod, in an appeal from Dr. Wilson, because Presbytery would not appoint a committee to investigate his sermon.

Dr. WILSON. — Was not the declaration made when Dr. Beecher was making a speech on that subject ?

Ans. — That is my impression.

Ques. by Dr. WILSON. — Was there a considerable crowd of spectators around the Synod at that time ?

Ans. — I do not recollect.

Dr. WILSON. — Was there not considerable excitement during the discussion of that subject ?

Ans. — There was.

RANKIN. — Was there anything in the Doctor's manner which induced you to believe that it was done for popular effect ?

Ans. — I have no distinct recollection at present of noticing his manner, but from all the circumstances of the case I was led to that opinion.

RANKIN. — What *were* the circumstances of the case ?

Ans. — The published sentiments of Dr. Beecher, and the place where it was uttered.

Dr. WILSON. — Was not Dr. Beecher at that time making an effort to prevent Synod from sustaining my complaint ?

Ans. — That is my impression now, but I cannot say positively. [Read to witness, and approved.]

The Presbytery then adjourned.

WEDNESDAY MORNING.

Presbytery met, and was opened with prayer.

The REV. A. S. MORISON, from the commission appointed to take the testimony of Professor Biggs, made the following report:

Walnut Hills, June 10, 1835.

Meeting opened with prayer.

Dr. WILSON wished Mr. Biggs to state what he knew on the subject, — Whether any Perfectionists were in attendance at Lane Seminary the last year?

Answer. — As young men whose minds were made up on that subject, I do not know that there were any.

Dr. WILSON. — Were there not students in Lane Seminary who were making inquiries and manifesting tendencies that way?

Ans. — I am under the impression that there were some.

Dr. WILSON. — From what sections of country did those young men come?

Ans. — From the State of New York. I think I had but two or three at all in my mind, of whom I had any suspicion.

Dr. WILSON. — What information did Prof. Biggs give me on this subject in a conversation we had at Hamilton?

Ans. — That Dr. Beecher, so far from countenancing the doctrine of Perfectionism, warned his students against such sentiments.

Dr. WILSON. — Were not the statements you made to me calculated to impress my mind with the belief that the students who manifested such tendencies to Perfectionism were led to place themselves under Dr. Beecher's instruction in consequence of his published views of theology?

Ans. — I have no recollection that they were.

Dr. BEECHER. — Did you ever hear any one of the students, at any time, avow the doctrine of Perfection?

Ans. — I never did.

Dr. BEECHER. — Had you any evidence of tendency to that doctrine, further than what results from questions common to inquiring minds, in the investigation of a subject, with reference to the formation of an opinion?

Ans. — I believe their inquiries were all directed with a view to the formation of an ultimate opinion.

Dr. BEECHER. — Were you apprized of the fact that one of my lectures was on the subject of Christian Character, and in opposition to the doctrine of Perfection?

Ans. — I so understood.

Dr. WILSON. — Did you cite T. D. Weld to appear before Presbytery as a witness in this case?

Ans. — I did not, for the following reasons:

1. I understood that the citation of all witnesses, except the members of the Presbytery, was dispensed with by agreement of the parties.

2. The same was understood by several of the brethren of the Presbytery, with whom I conversed on the subject, after the meeting of Presbytery, for the purpose of being myself certified of the fact.

To which I herewith affix my signature,

TH. I. BIGGS.

The following witnesses were then duly sworn, and their testimony recorded, as follows:

Francis Monfort's Testimony.

I recollect very well that Dr. Beecher said,—I believe the Confession of Faith contains the truth, the whole truth,

and nothing but the truth; after having shown that he received the Confession of Faith as a system.

Dr. WILSON. — Where, and under what circumstances, was the declaration made?

Answer. — It was in the First Church, in Synod, on the complaint of Dr. Wilson and others against Presbytery for not appointing a committee to examine certain sermons of Dr. Beecher.

Dr. WILSON. — What were the circumstances?

Ans. — The doctor was giving his last address; the house was full; there was considerable excitement.

Dr. WILSON. — When the same subject was before Presbytery, did not Dr. Beecher express his approbation of the standards of the Church, with the reservation of putting upon them his interpretation?

Ans. — So I understood it.

Dr. BEECHER. — Was the statement made before Synod attended by an explanation or qualification?

Ans. — I heard none.

Dr. BEECHER. — Did I profess before the Synod a belief in the Confession of Faith according to any other interpretation than the one I put upon it?

Ans. — I heard nothing said about interpretation. [Read to witness, and approved.]

Mr. Aton's Testimony.

I recollect distinctly that in the time and place specified in the charges —

[Dr. Beecher admits that the time, place and audience, were as described by the preceding witness.]

Witness resumed. — Dr. Beecher said he believed the Confession of Faith contained the truth, the whole truth, and

nothing but the truth. I heard no qualifications. [Read, &c.]

Mr. Gaines' Testimony.

I recollect very little distinctly. I recollect that Dr. Beecher uttered the words mentioned by Mr. Aton, and made a gesture more violent than usual; cannot recollect whether it was before Presbytery or Synod. [Read, &c.]

Mr. Burt's Testimony.

I agree with the witnesses in respect to the time, place and circumstances, so far as I have heard. I distinctly recollect that the Doctor, in the course of his speech, stated that the Confession of Faith contained the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth. Not expecting to be called upon, I have not treasured up a recollection of the circumstances, whether there were any qualifications or not. [Read, &c.]

D. Hayden's Testimony.

I heard Dr. Beecher say that he believed the Confession of Faith to contain the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth. I remember no qualifying statements. I think I should have remembered such qualifications, had they been made.

Dr. WILSON. — What was the declaration in Presbytery on the same subject?

Answer. — I do not recollect. [Read, &c.]

F. A. Kemper's Testimony.

I was a member of Synod in 1833. Dr. Beecher said he believed the Confession of Faith contained the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth. He made no ex-

planation at the time. When Dr. Wilson was replying, Dr. Beecher got up and made explanations.

Dr. WILSON. — Was you a member of Presbytery at the time the same subject was up there ?

Answer. — I think I was.

Dr. WILSON. — What were Dr. Beecher's declarations as to his reception of the Confession of Faith there ?

Ans. — That he adopted it as a system ; the Doctor called no man Father on earth, nor allowed any man to explain the Bible or Confession of Faith to him.

Mr. GAINES. — Had the explanations reference to the words, or something else ?

Ans. — To the words only.

Dr. BEECHER. — What were the explanations ?

Ans. — I do not recollect. [Read, &c.]

Judge Jacob Burnet's Testimony.

Called in by Dr. Beecher.

I was present at the time referred to by the other witnesses. I heard Dr. Beecher's address to the Synod. I recollect distinctly that in that part of his address in which he spoke of the Confession of Faith he said that there had been a time when he could not subscribe to the whole of it ; but by mature deliberation, and ascertaining to his own satisfaction what was the meaning attached to the terms when the Confession of Faith was written, the difficulty was entirely removed. He added that he now believed the Confession of Faith contained the truth, and I thought he said the whole truth. He raised his hands to his bosom, and said he believed it to be one of the best expositions of the meaning of the Scripture. I cannot give his words precisely. [Read, &c.]

A. Duncan's Testimony.

Dr. BEECHER. — How long have you been a member of Lane Seminary?

Answer. — Two years and a half.

Dr. BEECHER. — How long a member of the Theological Class?

Ans. — About a year and a half.

Dr. BEECHER. — Have you heard the testimony of Mr. Weed, and do your views correspond with his?

Ans. — Yes; except that my recollection of the discussion is not as distinct as his.

Dr. WILSON. — Did you see the letter addressed to T. D. Weld, in the *Perfectionist*?

Ans. — I saw it in Delhi, two miles from this city.

Dr. WILSON. — Who wrote that letter?

Ans. — I do not distinctly recollect his name; I think it was Dutton.

Dr. WILSON. — What was the general character and standing of Mr. Dutton?

Ans. — I know nothing about him, except that he was once studying theology with Mr. Kirk, of Albany. I have heard his intellect spoken of as one of great value.

Dr. WILSON. — On what occasion and in what manner did Dr. Beecher warn the students against the Perfectionists?

Ans. — I recollect no such warnings. I never heard of them, until I saw the letter in the *Perfectionist* at Delhi. I heard the lecture mentioned by Mr. Weed.

GEORGE BEECHER. — Did you see the written or printed copy of the letter?

Ans. — The printed.

Mr. RANKIN. — Do you know why he left Mr. Kirk?

Ans. — No.

Mr. RANKIN. — Was the *Perfectionist's* letter addressed to Mr. Weld, on the supposition that he was a Perfectionist?

Ans. — No. It contained a labored argument to show him the truth of those doctrines.

Mr. GRAVES. — Did you ever hear that Dr. Beecher was suspected of Perfectionism?

Ans. — Never, until I heard these charges. [Read, &c.]

Mr. Little's Testimony.

Dr. BEECHER. — What are your recollections of my language before Synod?

Answer. — I concur with Judge Burnet and Mr. Woodbury, except I heard this expression a little stronger than their language: "Dr. B. said the Confession of Faith and Catechisms contained the best compendium of the doctrine of the Bible he had seen." [Read, &c.]

Mr. Brainerd's Testimony.

I have seen the paper called the *Perfectionist*, and read it carefully. I have seen also many other extracts from the writings of the Perfectionists. They have three ways of becoming perfect. The first is, they believe themselves able to obey God, and do so. When pushed with difficulties in that view of the subject, they represent themselves as being, by the literal imputation of the righteousness of Christ to them, in that condition that God looks upon them as one with Christ, and does not regard their sins as sins. Again, they represent, sometimes, their perfection to be the result of the special grace of God; they say that God hears and answers all right prayer, that their perfection is a grace received in answer to their prayers.

Dr. WILSON. — Is not the whole theory of the Perfectionists

built upon the hypothesis of the natural ability of man to do all that God requires, and that sin lies wholly in the will?

Answer. — No : with those that believe in natural ability and moral inability, they reason according to the sentiment of the question ; with others, that deny this doctrine, they reason upon a different assumption.

Dr. WILSON. — With what difficulties are those pressed who hold to the ability of man to do what God requires, and say they *do it* ?

Ans. — I will not pretend to state all. The fact is shown, from their own conduct, that they do violate the laws of God ; those passages of scripture are opposed to them, which state that Christians, though not constrained by natural necessity, do sin.

Dr. WILSON. — What practices of the Perfectionists contradict their theory and profession, and how do you know that they are guilty of those practices ?

Ans. — They appear to fall into the same sins as other men, and I learn the fact that they thus sin, 1st, by the Bible, which teacheth that no man liveth and sinneth not ; and 2d, by the statements of their opponents, brought out in the publications of the day.

Dr. WILSON. — Are you personally and intimately acquainted with any persons of that denomination ?

Ans. — I never saw one.

Dr. WILSON. — What do they mean by the literal imputation of the righteousness of Christ ?

Ans. — They seem to mean, that they are so united to Christ, that all his obedience becomes theirs, in such a sense as to release them from criminality, although they violate the law of God.

Dr. BEECHER. — Do those Calvinists who teach the doctrine

of the literal imputation of Christ's Righteousness to believers deny the doctrine of man's natural ability?

Ans. — In speculation they do; in practice I believe most of them assume it to be true.

Mr. GASLEY. — Did not the system originate with those who held the doctrine of natural ability?

Ans. — From the region where it originated, I should think it probable; but I have no certain knowledge.

Mr. RANKIN. — Does not their system teach that man has by nature both natural and moral ability to do all that God requires of him?

Ans. — Strictly speaking, I think not; they do not deny that men have by nature an aversion to God, which has been called inability, which makes regeneration necessary.

Mr. ATON. — What do those Calvinists mean who teach the literal imputation of Christ's Righteousness?

Ans. — There is a class of professed Calvinists who seem to teach the doctrine of imputation, the same doctrine as the Perfectionists; but this I would not apply to any of those who hold and teach the doctrine of imputation in the sense of our Confession of Faith. [Read, &c.]

The oral testimony having now been completed;

The first charge was read a second time, and, as it referred to certain passages in Dr. Beecher's sermons, the clerk was about to read the passages cited; when

Mr. RANKIN moved that the entire sermon, and not extracts only, be read.

Dr. WILSON said, that if the whole sermon was to be read because a part of it was referred to in the charges, the whole Confession of Faith might as well be read, for certain parts of it were also cited.

Professor BIGGS could not consent that merely isolated passages should be read; he should be most unwilling to have his own character tried by garbled extracts selected from his writings; he could in that manner prove every man in the Presbytery a heretic. Let the connection of the passages with their context be seen; let their bearing be understood; let the Presbytery receive the same impression as the audience had received, before whom the sermons were delivered; and as to the objection which had been urged, if it was necessary for consistency's sake to read the whole Confession of Faith, let it be read.

Mr. RANKIN said there was an obvious difference between the reading of the Confession and the reading of the sermon. The Confession of Faith was not introduced before the court as evidence; the sermon had been? nor could the court have any just and adequate conception of what the passages cited conveyed, unless they listened to the whole, and understood the connection. Besides, in one part of the charge the sermons at large were cited, without any particular passages being specified.

Dr. WILSON admitted, on reflection, that the cases of the Confession and the Sermon were not analogous. He had no objection to the reading of the sermons entire: it could do no harm: but he wished the court to bear in mind that there was such a thing as insinuating the most deadly poison into the most wholesome aliment. He was ready to admit that the sermons (and he had read them attentively many times) did contain many things that were excellent: but the ground of his charge was that the author had placed in the very midst of them the most deleterious poison. Were Dr. Wilson invited to partake of a dish of what appeared to be food of the most nutritious kind, and after commencing, and finding it

to be delicious and wholesome, he should suddenly come to a deposit of arsenic, he should stop, and eat no more, unless he could with certainty pass over that portion of the preparation, and complete his meal with what was not poisoned. Let the whole be read: the court, he was well assured, would be able to separate the precious from the vile.

Dr. BEECHER said it was his right to have the documents referred to in the charges read entire.

The *Moderator* admitted this: but expressed a doubt whether the present was the proper stage in the proceedings at which this right might be exercised. In his defence Dr. Beecher might very properly give the whole sermon in argument, to show that the charge was not well founded.

Dr. BEECHER still insisted on having the whole read. If Dr. Wilson wished to verify the extracts he had made, Dr. Beecher was ready to admit their accuracy: at least, he took it for granted the passages had been copied correctly. But it was certainly the fair and correct mode of proceeding to allow the body of the sermon, as delivered, to make its own impression, and then the force of the passages excepted to could be better judged of. In no well-constructed sermon could a single passage give the effect of the whole. A sermon was heretical or otherwise according to the combined and intended results of all its parts taken together. In every properly written sermon, the combined effect was the end aimed at, and all the parts were so arranged, and so made to follow each other, as best to secure that end. Let the sermon tell its own story: and then the court might make what analysis of it they might deem proper.

The sermons on the Native Character of Man — as given in this volume, pp. 53—82 — were thereupon read.

The second, third and fourth charges were read: and then

the sermon to which they referred, namely, "Dependence and Free Agency," a sermon delivered in Andover Theological Seminary, July 16, 1832, — as given in this volume, pp. 13—52.

Dr. WILSON stated that he wished to lay before the Presbytery certain information showing on what grounds he had been induced to state that the Perfectionists claimed Dr. Beecher as strengthening their hypothesis.

The *Moderator* inquired whether Dr. Wilson wished to introduce this information as testimony in support of any one of the charges he had preferred?

He replied that he did not: it was a letter from an individual who was not and could not be present, and whose testimony had not been formally taken.

After a discussion, the letter to which Dr. Wilson referred was permitted to be read. It was a letter contained in a newspaper published at New Haven, entitled "*The Perfectionist*," and addressed to Theodore Weld, late a student in Lane Seminary.

The letter being very long, and appearing to be on a subject wholly unconnected with the matter in hand, it was moved that the reading be arrested, and that only so much be read as Dr. Wilson had referred to.

The *Moderator* decided, that, if any part of the paper was read, the whole must be.

Mr. RANKIN inquired what was the signature of the letter.

The *Clerk* stated that it had no signature: whereupon, on motion of Mr. Burnet, seconded by Prof. Biggs, the paper was rejected, as being no testimony.

Dr. WILSON gave notice that he took exception to this decision; in order that he might avail himself of such exception, should the case go up to Synod. And also, that he should

avail himself of the testimony introduced by Dr. Beecher before the last meeting of Presbytery, namely, his own sermon, with a review of the same by Dr. Green. . . .

The examination of testimony being resumed;

Dr. WILSON stated that he had no further testimony on the part of the charges.

SILAS WOODBURY was examined, and his testimony is as follows:

I was present in the Synod, when Dr. Beecher gave his statement; and facts are substantially as given by Judge Burnet, according to the best of my recollection.

The testimony being now closed, it was moved that the parties be heard.

Dr. WILSON stated that he was much exhausted, and requested an adjournment.

Dr. BEECHER gave notice that he might have occasion to introduce further testimony, should he be able to procure it, before proceeding to the defence.

Presbytery then took up other business before them, and which occupied the judicatory until the hour of adjournment.

Presbytery then adjourned.

THURSDAY MORNING.

Presbytery met, and was opened with prayer.

Further testimony was introduced on the part of Dr. Beecher.

Dr. WILSON said that he wished to apprise the Presbytery of a difficulty which must arise from their having rejected the information he had been desirous of laying before them, and which was contained in a letter not permitted to be read. If the present trial should not terminate according to the views

of the prosecutor, and the case should go up to the Synod, it would be necessary for him to obtain from Synod an attested copy of their decision in the case, which would be attended with great delay. But, if this letter should now be received, the delay and inconvenience would be avoided. It would be remembered that there was an express rule, which admits the offering of new testimony before a superior court in cases of appeal, where the court should deem such testimony requisite to a right decision.

Mr. BRAINERD observed there need be no difficulty, as Dr. Wilson could get from the Synod all he had need of.

Dr. WILSON said that the writer of the letter was the Rev. Dr. Phillips, of New York; and that he should have cited him as a witness upon the present trial, if he had not understood that the citation of all witnesses, save the members of the court, was by agreement waived.

Mr. BRAINERD said, that nothing of this sort had been stated before the Presbytery.

Dr. WILSON then observed, that as there appeared to be some mistake as to the extent of Dr. Beecher's concessions, he wanted to know whether the fourth specification of the sixth charge was conceded, or not.

Dr. BEECHER replied that all was conceded which was contained in the sermon referred to.

Dr. WILSON then inquired, if the fact in that specification was not conceded, whether he had not a right to the testimony which he had cited to support it; and whether the cause must not be suspended till such testimony was obtained. He was resolved to have that testimony before he proceeded any further.

Dr. BEECHER wished to know, whether, supposing that specification to be proved, Dr. Wilson meant to avail himself

of it with a view to show that the sermon in question had been written and shaped in reference to Dr. Beecher's coming into the Presbyterian church. The date of the sermon would speak for itself, without any concession. If Dr. Wilson wanted to know whether the sermon was printed at the time Dr. Beecher was about coming into the Presbyterian church, there was no secret about the matter. But if he wanted it to be conceded that the sermon was either prepared or published with reference to Dr. Beecher's coming to this place and being the President of Lane Seminary, that would not be conceded. Dr. Wilson might argue from the date of the sermon in any way he pleased.

Dr. WILSON said, all he wanted was the fact, that he might use it in argument. If Dr. Beecher conceded the fact, Dr. Wilson would have the right to draw such inference from it as he might deem proper.

Dr. BEECHER. — You may draw it. As to the fact, it is conceded.

The concession was, by Dr. Wilson's desire, put upon record.

Dr. BEECHER now called for the testimony of Edward Weed.

Dr. WILSON inquired whether Mr. Weed was a member of the church.

The *Moderator* replied that he was an elder of the Fourth church in Cincinnati, and a candidate under the care of the Chillicothe Presbytery.

Mr. WEED was thereupon duly sworn; and his testimony, being taken, was as follows:

Dr. BEECHER. — How long was you a member of the Lane Seminary?

Answer. — Two years and a half.

Dr. BEECHER. — How long a member of the Theological Class ?

Ans. — One year.

Dr. BEECHER. — Was there, during your continuance in the seminary, to your knowledge, any member who was a Perfectionist ?

Ans. — I knew of none.

Dr. BEECHER. — Was there any whom you regarded as tending to that opinion ?

Ans. — None.

Dr. WILSON. — Did you, while a member of that seminary, see a letter addressed to T. D. Weld, in the *Perfectionist* ?

Ans. — I saw it in the city. [Weed resided on Walnut Hills, at the Seminary.]

Dr. WILSON. — Who was the writer of that letter ?

Ans. — I cannot say.

Dr. WILSON. — Do you know why Dr. Beecher warned the students against Perfectionism, and delivered a set lecture on that subject ?

Ans. — I think I know. I think that, in one of the lectures of Dr. Beecher, the discussion came up, whether an individual could, at the same time, be under the exercise of religious feeling and commit sin.

Dr. WILSON. — What arguments were advanced by some of the students in favor of the doctrine, that, while under religious feeling, Christians cannot commit sin ?

Ans. — The discussion was simply in the form of questions and answers ; and it was argued on the part of the students, in this discussion, that an individual's feelings were, at the same time, entirely holy or entirely sinful.

Dr. BEECHER. — Did every student profess to express his own opinion on those subjects ?

Ans. — No. They simply argued on that side of the question, in order to elicit Dr. Beecher's opinion.

Dr. BEECHER. — Was it in immediate connection with this discussion (perhaps at the next lecture) that I gave a regular discussion of this subject?

Ans. — I think it was the next lecture,—he explained the seventh chapter of Romans to the class.

Dr. BEECHER. — Was it in opposition to the views of the Perfectionists?

Ans. — It was in opposition to the theory that the Christian's feelings are entirely holy or entirely sinful. It had not special reference to the Perfectionists.

Dr. BEECHER. — Did any student express it as his opinion in any other form than to elicit opinions from me?

Ans. — No, not in the discussion.

Dr. WILSON. — Did every student express it as his opinion in any other place, in their intercourse with their fellow-students?

Ans. — There were many students who expressed their opinion that each moral feeling is entirely holy or entirely sinful, but not an individual who believed in the doctrine of the Perfectionists.

Dr. BEECHER. — Were there any of the students who believed that any person in this life attained to that state where they had only holy affections, and none sinful?

Ans. — Not an individual; they all discarded it.

Dr. BEECHER. — Did their sense of their own depravity correspond with that of other Christians in their conversation and confessions of sin in prayer?

Ans. — Yes.

Mr. BRAINERD. — Did you ever hear that Dr. Beecher

was suspected of Perfectionism, until you heard it from Dr. Wilson's charges?

Ans. — I never heard, until yesterday, that Dr. Beecher was charged or suspected of Perfectionism. [Read, &c.]

Dr. WILSON then addressed the court as follows :

Moderator : The important and blessed ends of Church government and discipline can only be attained by a wise and faithful administration. In the hand of Church officers the Lord Jesus Christ has placed the government of his kingdom on earth ; and I can conceive of no station more responsible than that occupied by those officers to whom are committed the keys of the kingdom of heaven ; — to open that kingdom to the penitent ; to shut it against the impenitent ; to vindicate the truth and the honor of Christ ; to purge out that unholy leaven of error which might infect the whole lump ; to deter men from the commission of offences, and prevent the wrath of God from falling on the church.*

It belongs to the officers of the kingdom of our Lord, when solemnly convened as a court of Christ, ministerially and authoritatively to determine not only cases of conscience and matters of practice, but to decide controversies of faith ; and their decisions, if consonant to the word of God, are to be received with reverence and submission.†

Of all the subjects brought before a Church court for adjudication, none are so important as controversies of faith, and none so difficult to determine. None so important, because truth is essential to purity, peace, and goodness ; and no crime, of a pardonable nature, is so great as that of corrupting the word of God, so as to preach another Gospel. No adjudications are more difficult, because, under the ap-

* Confession of Faith, ch. xxx. p. 129.

† Ibid. p. 132.

pearance of piety, zeal, and liberality, — by popular talent and the arts of persuasion, by the concealing of the poison of asps under the pure milk and meat of some salutary truths, and by an appeal to numbers and wealth and success, — false teachers, if it were possible, would deceive the very elect.* The whole history of the Church proves that no crime ever committed has been so complicated, so hard to be detected, so difficult of eradication, so hurtful to the Church, so ruinous to the world, as the preaching of another gospel. And, Sir, no class of men has ever possessed more talent, manifested more zeal, exhibited more perseverance, or exerted greater numerical and pecuniary power, or gained a more elevated popular applause, than some false teachers. And this, we have reason to believe, will continue to be the case till “the day of the Lord cometh that shall burn as an oven,” till “the sons of Levi shall be purified,” “the sanctuary of God cleansed,” and “the kingdom, and the greatness of the kingdom under the whole heaven, shall be given to the people of the saints of the Most High.” Were it necessary, before an enlightened court of Christ, to support these statements by proof and illustration, I might cite to you the state of the Church in the time of Jeroboam, in the days of Ahab, and the period which elapsed between the reign of Josiah and the eleventh year of Zedekiah. I might remind you of those who compassed sea and land to make a proselyte, in the time of Christ; of those who called the apostles and elders from their fields of labor to determine a controversy about doctrine, commenced at Antioch and adjudicated at Jerusalem. I might tell the long and melancholy stories of Arius, Pelagius, Socinus, and

* Matthew 24 : 24.

Arminius: I might speak of the powerful but perverted talents of the great Erasmus, and notice the dazzling splendor of Edward Irving: I might name men in our own times, in our own Church, whose eloquence and popularity have deluded thousands, and turned them aside from the truth and simplicity of the Gospel. But I forbear, and only add, that the case before you is a case precisely in point. You are called upon to determine a controversy about doctrines;—doctrines intimately connected with practice; doctrines of vital interest to the Church of Christ; doctrines which are parts of a system wholly subversive of the Gospel of God; doctrines which have been propagated with a zeal and talent worthy of a better cause, and the propagation of which has deeply convulsed and shaken into disunion the Presbyterian Church in the United States, from the Atlantic to the Missouri, and from the lakes to the Gulf of Mexico.

And now, Sir, permit me to remind you, while sitting as a court of Jesus Christ, that there are several things which stand as prominent obstacles in the way of a just decision; and these I must be permitted to remove, before it will be possible for you to make a decision in accordance with the standards of the Church:

1. The character of the accuser in this prosecution stands as one, and the first, obstacle in the way of a correct decision. The accuser, in this prosecution, is considered by many as a litigious, *ultra* partisan in the Presbyterian Church. In attempting to wipe away this odium, he puts in no plea of personal merit. He feels himself to be a man of like passions with others; and, when he has felt deeply, his language has been plain, and has strongly expressed the feelings of his heart. Whatever may have been the opinions formed of his merit or demerit, these opinions ought to have no place in the

trial. Yet your records contain matter going to show that documents had been received by the court which were intended to prove the ecclesiastical incompetency of the prosecutor. Whether those documents have been placed upon your files; whether they are anonymous, or over responsible names; whether they are so placed that they will be come-at-able in case of need,—are matters not for me to decide. The very record itself, in respect to these papers, is so equivocal in its terms, that no future historian will, from inspecting it, be able to tell whether the charges have been taken up by Presbytery on the ground that the accuser is competent, or from mere courtesy to the feelings of the accused. The supposition that the admission of the charges has been purely gratuitous, and that they have been acted upon out of mere courtesy to the accused, places an obstacle in the course of justice. How far it will be permitted to operate, I pretend not to say; but I do believe that that will be the impression produced, because I know something of impressions made upon the human mind. I feel persuaded that neither rashness nor unkindness has appeared either in the charges themselves or in the manner of conducting them. Whatever may have been my youthful indiscretions, or whatever may have been the spirit I have manifested when again and again placed at your bar, I think I may appeal to you, Sir, and to every member of this court, to say whether, in the course of the present trial thus far, it has not been conducted, on my part, with that temper, and in that manner, which becomes one standing in the important station which I occupy. I have manifested no impatience under much needless delay; I have treated the court with due deference, and the man whose theological sentiments I cannot approve with uniform respect and courtesy. I feel confident, therefore, that when

the subject shall be viewed in all its parts, the obstacle which arises from the character of the accuser will be removed, and you will approach the decision of the cause, in that respect at least, with an unbiased mind.

2. A second obstacle in the way of a just decision of this trial is found in the character, standing and talents, of the accused. Were the accused a man isolated in society, of but moderate talents, low attainments, and of bad moral character, there would be little, perhaps no difficulty, in obtaining a decision against him ; but the very reverse of all this is true. And it is also true, as has been strenuously pleaded before you (with what effect I know not), that Dr. Beecher, by a long life of correct conduct, and by the diligent promulgation of what he believes to be religious truth, has acquired a large capital in character and reputation, on which it has been supposed that he could live in the West, notwithstanding all opposition. While all this is not denied, and while it is freely admitted that his efforts, especially in the temperance cause, have been such as to secure him not only admiration at home, but fame in both hemispheres, and throughout the world,—yet it is believed to be very questionable whether he has been able to import with him here all that amount of capital in established character which he possessed before crossing the Appalachian. On this point, I shall refer the court to what was written in New England touching the manner of his acquiring this capital, and also showing the loss of much of it before he took his stand among us of the West ; thereby proving that the loss he has sustained was not owing to the opposition he has had to encounter on this side the mountains, but was incurred in the land from which he emigrated. I shall beg to call the attention of the Presbytery to two short passages in a book entitled, “ Letters on

the Present State and Probable Results of Theological Speculations in Connecticut."

Mr. BRAINERD inquired who was the author of the letters.

Dr. WILSON stated, in reply, that they appeared under the signature of "An Edwardean," and contended that they were to be received on the same footing as the papers submitted by Dr. Beecher at the last meeting of Presbytery.

Mr. BRAINERD thought not; those papers had been signed with the initials J. L. W., understood to mean Joshua L. Wilson.

Dr. WILSON replied, that he introduced these extracts in order to show how the views expressed in the letters of Dr. Beecher and Dr. Woods were viewed in New England, before Dr. Beecher left that country; and if they were not evidence of that fact, then there was no such thing as evidence of anything. If he was to be prohibited from referring to such proofs, then he might give up at once all expectation of being allowed to argue the present question.

Mr. BRAINERD said, that if the letters were read as anonymous, and were introduced merely as a part of Dr. Wilson's argument, he had no objections to their being read.

Dr. BEECHER wished to know what the accuser intended to prove by these extracts. How did they bear on the matter in hand?

Dr. WILSON replied, that he introduced them to prove that Dr. Beecher had not brought all that amount of capital into the West which he had alleged, and which he represented Dr. Wilson as the instrument of curtailing.

Dr. BEECHER replied, he was perfectly willing that the extracts should be read; because he was not willing it should be supposed he was afraid of having this, or anything else

that could be produced, read before the whole world; but he believed the admission of them to be wholly irregular. Neither Dr. Wilson nor himself was here to be tried on the point whether Dr. Beecher did or did not bring with him into the West the whole of the capital he had possessed in the East. What if he did? or what if he did not? The thing was wholly *outré*. Yet he desired Dr. Wilson might be indulged to read it: he must take the liberty, however, of saying that it was wholly irrelevant to the trial.

The *Moderator* thought the reading had better be allowed: Dr. Beecher would have an opportunity of speaking of its irrelevancy when his defence was in order.

Dr. WILSON replied, that he wished to introduce nothing irrelevant; nor should he have ever thought of reading from this book, had not Dr. Beecher attempted to produce an impression to Dr. Wilson's disadvantage and his own elevation. The book seemed to be written not only with good judgment, but by a man who possessed a Christian spirit. In animadverting on a letter of Dr. Beecher to Dr. Woods, of Andover, the author first quoted the words of the letter, and then used the following language in relation to it:

Dr. Beecher "has had the deliberate opinion, for many years, derived from extensive observation, and a careful attention to the elementary principles of the various differences which have agitated the Church, that the ministers of the Orthodox Congregational Church, and the ministers of the Presbyterian Church, are all cordially united in every one of the doctrines of the Bible, and of the Confessions of Faith, which have been regarded and denominated fundamental." (See his second letter to Dr. Woods.) How much to be lamented is it that Dr. Beecher did not make this discovery in season, or that he did not seasonably feel its influence, to have saved unbroken the harmony of his native state, and the peace of the surrounding region! For, whence came those charges of *physical depravity*, and *physical regeneration*, and of *making God the author of sin*, which certainly did not arise without his knowledge, and which have

grieved his brethren for years? Whence came that labored effort, a few years since, to make a new creed or confession of faith for the state? who introduced it to the General Association, or advised to that measure, to the grief and agitation of many minds, if, as Dr. Beecher supposes, we are all cordially agreed in every one of the doctrines of the Bible? Again, Dr. Beecher “doubts not that we might so live as to leave the church in a blaze of controversy, which the generation to come might not live to see extinguished.” And what, I ask, has prevented the blaze of controversy, for ten years past, but the forbearance of those who, though assailed on every side, have chosen to make almost any sacrifice for peace? And what now prevents a blaze of controversy, that many generations will not see extinguished, unless those who adhere to the faith of their fathers are willing to see themselves, and what they esteem the truth, trampled in the dust? Let Dr. Beecher view the subject on all sides. But he has at length made the discovery that there is a great difference, in “the eye of Heaven, in the eye of man, and in our own eye, on a death-bed, and on the record of eternity, between the appearance of a great pacification, or a great conflagration, achieved by our instrumentality.” He is certainly to be congratulated on this discovery, and had he made it ten years ago the present agitations would not have been witnessed. But it is matter of joy that the discovery has been made, and it is devoutly to be hoped the effects will soon be visible. Let Dr. Beecher, then, use his influence to remove the present causes of irritation and suspicion. Let us have men at the head of our Theological Seminary in whom all the churches and ministers have confidence; and thus give us back, as an united community, our college, our Christian Spectator, our candidates for the ministry, our revivals of religion, our harmonious associations, our united churches. But if this cannot be done, let not Dr. Beecher, or any other man, suppose that the Christian community will always be amused with mere sound, or that the cause of truth will be sacrificed to the interests or caprice of a few men. — pp. 32, 33.

Another consideration is derived from the letters recently published by Dr. Beecher to Dr. Woods. These letters contain some pathetic remarks on the benefits of union, and the evils of alienation. But these remarks from Dr. Beecher come too late in the day, and they imply an incorrect view of the subject. They imply that the divisions and alienations are occasioned by the opponents of Dr. Taylor, whereas they are chargeable wholly to his friends and himself. It is presumed that some transactions, which took place ten years ago, are not now present to Dr. Beecher's recollection.

The days and nights he has spent with Dr. Taylor, in maturing and bringing forward this very system, which makes all the disturbance, and the warnings they then received from an intimate friend, who was sometimes present, and who pointed out to them these very consequences, have probably passed, in some degree, into oblivion. There is no doubt, that if Dr. Beecher would even now set himself to undo what by his countenance he has done in this matter, the breach would, in a great measure, be healed. But for him now to write letters on the benefits or duty of union, though very full of feeling, will not reach the case. Some example with precept is needful. And especially let him not attempt now to cast the odium of this separation on those who have done nothing to produce it, and who have, from the beginning, deprecated its existence ; those who have kept straight forward in the doctrines, in which they have always found consolation, and by which they would administer it to others. — pp. 43, 44.

DR. WILSON said, that after reading this he would only remark that the date here given corresponded exactly with the period mentioned by Dr. Beecher himself, in which he had been engaged in preaching and publishing the doctrines he now held. That period he stated to have been the last ten years ; and it was within just that period, according to this writer, that the troubles and disturbances of the churches of New England on the subject of the new Divinity had been experienced. This coincidence of date gave the more authenticity to the statements of the Edwardean.

DR. WILSON now proceeded to read from a printed " Letter to Dr. Beecher, on the Influence of his Ministry in Boston : by Rev. Asa Rand, Editor of the *Volunteer* ;" as follows :

The object which I aim to accomplish is, either to elicit something from yourself or your friends which may remove injurious perplexities ; or, if these must remain on your part, to disabuse the public mind of prevailing misapprehensions, and so arrest or retard, if it may be, the progress of existing evils. I say disabuse the public mind ; for although there are many who probably understand and follow you, and many others who regard your course as inconsistent and erroneous, yet there are multitudes

in our churches who do not, for lack of information, understand this subject, even so far as it is intelligible to others. They have been accustomed to listen to you almost as to an oracle. They have heard from you and of you things which startle them. But they have heard of your disclaimers, and your abundant professions of orthodoxy ; and they dispose of their perplexities as they are able. Some stand in doubt of you ; but hope and believe all things. Others believe your professions, and impute your seeming vagaries to the eccentricities of your mind and the warmth of your preaching. — pp. 4, 5.

The novelties to which I refer in this letter are those which have been called “new Divinity,” and “new measures.” I mean the theology of the New Haven school, and the measures for converting sinners and promoting revivals, which have had their principal seat of operation in the State of New York. It is no part of my object, — it would lead me too far out of the way, — to prove these principles and measures to be unscriptural, or even to show, at any considerable length, what they are. That they exist, is, I believe, granted on every side. That their advocates believe them to be widely different from old principles and measures, and also to be exceedingly preferable to them, is manifest, from the fact that they continually inculcate and extol the new, and expressly undervalue the old ; from the fact that they pertinaciously adhere to their alleged improvements, although they know they are unacceptable to a large portion of their brethren, and have excited animosities and divisions ; and from the fact that they seize every occasion to diffuse their principles, and to introduce men who preach them, at every open door. My complaint against you, sir, is, that you have acted fully with other leaders in this matter, but not with that open avowal of your object which was to be expected from your general reputation for frankness, and from your Christian profession.

Of this new scheme of doctrine, which I have said I cannot stay to exhibit at length, it is requisite I should give a synopsis. Perhaps I cannot better characterize it, in a few words, than by saying that it resembles, in its prominent features and bearing, *Wesleyanism* ; a strange mingling of evangelical doctrine with Arminian speculations ; a system, if such it may be called, which the orthodox of New England have long believed to be subversive of the Gospel, and tending to produce spurious conversions. It certainly has some variations from that system, however, which I need not point out. It professedly embraces the atonement, the Deity of Christ, the Trinity, the personality and offices of the Spirit, depravity, regeneration, justification, and the other doctrines of grace. Its distinctive feature

is, that it abundantly inculcates human activity and ability in the affair of salvation ; even professing to resuscitate them from the dead, alleging that we have heretofore killed and buried them. Holding that sinners, though depraved, have *power* to convert themselves, it proposes the minute and direct *steps* by which they may effect it, content with a general allusion, now and then, to the necessity of a Divine influence to aid and persuade them. — pp. 5, 6.

Apparently induced by their wish to present the ability and obligation of sinners in the strongest light, and to convert them as fast as possible by every means, the preachers in question have renewed the attempt which has been a thousand times baffled before, — an attempt to make the humbling doctrines of the Gospel plain and acceptable to the carnal mind. Original sin is explained away. Adult depravity is resolved into a *habit* of sinning, and the various ruling passions ; while the deep, fixed, inherent aversion of the soul to God and all holiness is kept out of sight. Election, the sovereignty of God, the special influence of the Spirit in renovating the heart, are so explained that the “ natural man ” can understand them, and be reconciled to them besides.

Yourself and the public will expect to know my *reasons* for regarding you as connected with the New Haven school, and a leading advocate of their theology. I will now attempt to give them.

1. *Your preaching, together with your treatment of inquirers and converts.* And, when I speak of this character of your sermons and addresses, I do not intend an occasional sentence or expression ; but the prevailing tone of sentiment, on frequent occasions, among your own people, to other congregations in the city, and at numerous opportunities abroad.

I cannot, however, refer to chapter and verse, or quote your language verbatim. You have seldom put your new theology to the press, though you have published much on various topics. Whether the omission has been by design, or for imperative reasons, I know not. I must, therefore, resort to other sources of evidence. And I here premise that I do not affirm what you *have* preached, but what you have been *understood* to preach ; for the words of the oral preacher pass into the air, and cannot be remembered with perfect accuracy, and repeated with confidence. I only mean to say, that in New England the impression is strong and deep that you have fully preached among us the theology above described ; that, while Dr. Taylor and others have written, and reasoned, and philosophized, and mysticized, you have rendered the same system palpable and practical in your preaching and ministrations, subserving their cause far more effectually than they have done themselves. — pp. 8, 9.

Dr. WILSON said he had marked other passages with the intent to read them, but would spare the time of the court, and lay the book on the table for reference.

Now, he wished the Presbytery to recollect the object for which he had introduced and read these printed documents ; it was to show that whatever amount of capital Dr. Beecher might have attained, within the last ten years, it had been diminished, in no inconsiderable degree, before he had taken up his line of march for the West ; and, therefore, the loss was not chargeable to the opposition of Dr. Wilson. But, suppose all this proof be laid wholly out of view, and suppose that Dr. Beecher is still in possession of the entire amount of fame which can be the result of a long life devoted to the promotion of what he believed the cause of truth and benevolence, was this to be pleaded in his favor here ? Was he to be more exempt from the judgment of his peers than the humblest individual in society ? Dr. Wilson would say to the court, on this subject, "Look not upon his countenance, nor upon the height of his intellectual stature." You are to "know no man after the flesh." His talents, fame, and even his usefulness, ought not to be remembered, when you cast your eye upon the charges now before you. The inquiries submitted to you are plain and important. Has he published and preached prominent and radical errors ? What methods has he taken to propagate and render them popular in the Presbyterian Church ?

3. A third obstacle, said Dr. Wilson, presented in the way of a just decision in this case, is Dr. Greene's review of Dr. Beecher's sermon on "The Faith once delivered to the Saints." Extracts from this review were read before this court at its last meeting to prove—what ?—to prove that if the specifications made under these charges be all true, they

form no proper ground of complaint! Now, I should not have referred to this sermon, or to Dr. Greene's review of it, had they not been brought before you by Dr. Beecher himself. I confess that all my knowledge of the sermon is from the author's own statement, from Dr. Greene's review of it, and from the review in the *Christian Examiner*, together with Dr. Beecher's answer in the *Christian Spectator*. Thus, I get a knowledge of sermons I never read. But I would ask, Is Dr. Greene to be quoted as good authority against the standards of the Presbyterian Church? Dr. Greene, it is said, pronounced Dr. Beecher a Calvinist. Permit me, Sir, to disabuse your minds on this subject. Dr. Beecher did not call his own sentiments Calvinistic. He called his sermon "a select system"—held by no man nor denomination, so as to render it proper to call it by the name of any man or any sect; and he says that some of almost every denomination hold it, and some reject it. Dr. Greene gives the same account of Dr. Beecher's "select system." He says that Calvinists, in the most proper sense of the term, would except to some of the articles of this system; and a great many who would by no means consent to be denominated Calvinists would only consider Dr. Beecher as holding the evangelical system *substantially*. Well, indeed, did Dr. Greene say that strict and proper Calvinists would except to some of Dr. Beecher's articles of faith. Look, Sir, at the following:—"Men are in the possession of such faculties, and placed in such circumstances, as render it practicable for them to do whatever God requires." This is an article in Dr. Beecher's "select system" to which no true Calvinist, and but few Arminians, can subscribe; for, while it directly contradicts the Calvinistic creed on the one hand, on the other it asserts an ability in fallen man which intelligent Arminians deny. In-

deed, Sir, no man can assert such an ability in fallen man, — much less can he make it the foundation of divine government, — without being deeply imbued with the Pelagian heresy, and making a display of his entire ignorance of the true doctrines of the *Fall*.

In reference to the Atonement, Dr. Beecher states that God can maintain the influence of his law, and forgive sin, on the condition of repentance toward God, and faith in our Lord Jesus Christ; and, that a compliance with these conditions is practicable, in the regular exercise of the powers and faculties given to man as an accountable creature. [See *Christian Advocate*, vol. II., pp. 31, 32.] Every man who understands the Socinian controversy knows that these are precisely the sentiments of Unitarians. Did Dr. Greene say that Dr. Beecher was a Calvinist? No. What Dr. Greene attempts to show is, that Dr. Beecher's "select system" contains sentiments to which no strict Calvinist, no strict Arminian, can subscribe; and this is precisely what Dr. Beecher himself asserted of this select system. His words are these: "It is a select system, which some of almost every denomination hold, and some reject." And he calls it evangelical, to prevent circumlocution. Now, I claim the right of calling this "select system" by a more appropriate name. And, as Dr. Beecher is extremely anxious to be considered a Calvinist, I will call his select system *Liberal Calvinism*; and I will adopt the language of Dr. Greene, and say, "the peculiar sentiments of the class of Calvinists to which Dr. Beecher belongs are also apparent in other parts of this discourse." And what is liberal Calvinism? According to Huntington (I do not mean Huntington of London, nor Huntington in Boston, formerly in the Old South church; but Huntington the author of *Calvinism Improved*), in his book, entitled Cal-

vinism Improved; liberal Calvinism is Universal Salvation. According to Dr. Taylor and Professor Fitch; liberal Calvinism is the adoption of a Calvinistic creed "for substance of doctrine," admitting the primary propositions, and rejecting the secondary as unwarranted and obsolete explanations. According to others, liberal Calvinism is the stepping-stone to Pelagian perfection. In my opinion, liberal Calvinism is that select system now called in the Presbyterian Church New-Schoolism. What did liberal Calvinism do in Scotland? It produced the moderate party, against which Dr. Witherspoon wrote his celebrated "Characteristics." What did liberal Calvinism do in England? It placed a Unitarian in the very pulpit once occupied by the venerable Matthew Henry. What did liberal Calvinism do in Geneva? It placed a Neologian in the very seat of Calvin. What has liberal Calvinism done in America? It has undermined and almost annihilated the Saybrook Platform in New England; it has divided, distracted, and almost ruined, the Presbyterian Church, under the care of the General Assembly; it has exalted unto high places men whose talents and opinions are inimical to the dearest interests of truth; it has palmed upon the East and West and South such talented and liberal spirits as Duncan, and Flint, and Clapp! And does Dr. Beecher consider it applause to be called a liberal Calvinist? Yes, Sir; in this he glories. And, in language which cannot be mistaken, he declares that nothing has done more to eclipse the Sun of Righteousness than "old dead orthodoxy." He tells you that, as a Congregationalist in New England, his creed was the Assembly's Shorter Catechism, and the Saybrook Platform; that, as a Presbyterian, his creed is our Confession of Faith; and, at the same time, he declares that there is nothing in these charges, on the subject of erroneous doctrine, but what

he has preached and published, from ten to twenty years, in his "select system," which some of all sorts believe, and some of all sorts reject. And what does he desire you to infer from all this? That his sentiments are in accordance with the standards of the church, at least, "for substance of doctrine;" or, if there be "shades of difference," they have been so long, so perseveringly and extensively propagated, that there is now no just cause of complaint; as if, when a man is arraigned for sapping the foundation of civil society, and introducing misrule in all the states, he should plead in bar of the prosecution, or in mitigation of his offence, that, as he had been engaged in the project of a select system from ten to twenty years, no one now had any right to complain! But, suppose Dr. Greene, in 1824, delighted with the ability with which Dr. Beecher defended or sustained the doctrine of the Trinity, had, in kindness and courtesy, overlooked the errors of the "select system," and pronounced Dr. Beecher a Calvinist in so many words; what weight ought such a declaration to have with you, on a trial held eleven years afterwards? It ought, Sir, to be with you less than the dust of the balance. Could Dr. Greene possibly have foreseen what evils would result from this "select system" in ten years? And can any man now see the amount of mischief which this "select system" will produce in ten years more, if the desolating tide is not rolled back?

4. A fourth obstacle in the way of a just decision is the claim that is set up on the subject of interpretation. Let us see what this claim of interpretation is. I quote from Dr. Beecher's work, entitled "The Causes and Remedy of Scepticism."—Vide vol. I. page 65.

With these remarks in view, I proceed to observe that the creeds of the Reformation are also made often the occasion of perplexity and doubt to

inexperienced minds. * * They were constructed amidst the most arduous controversy that ever taxed the energies of man, and with the eye fixed upon the errors of the day, and on the points around which the battle chiefly raged. On some topics they are more full than the proportion of the faith now demands ; some of their phraseology also, once familiar, would now, without explanation, inculcate sentiments which are not Scriptural, which the framers did not believe, and the creeds were never intended to teach. * * *

Of course, they appear rather as insulated, independent, abstract propositions, than as the symmetrical parts and proportions of a beautiful and glorious system of divine legislation, for maintaining the laws and protecting the rights of the universe, while the alienated are reconciled and the guilty are pardoned ; and though, as abstract truths correctly expounded according to the intention of the framers, they unquestionably inculcate the system of doctrines contained in the Holy Scriptures ; and though, as landmarks and boundaries between truth and error, they are truly important ; yet, as the means for the popular exposition and the saving application of truth, they are far short of the exigencies of the day in which we live, — mere skeletons of truth, compared with the system clothed, and beautified, and inspired with life, as it exists and operates in the Word of God. Unhappily, also, some of the most important truths they inculcate are, in their exposition, so twisted in with the reigning philosophy of the day, as to be in the popular apprehension identified with it ; and are made odious and repellant by its errors, as if these philosophical theories were the fundamental doctrines of the Bible. There is no end to the mischief which false philosophy, employed in the exposition and defence of the doctrines of the Reformation, has in this manner accomplished. Good men have contended for theories as if they were vital to the system, and regarded as heretical those who received the doctrine of the Bible, and only rejected their philosophy.

* * * * *

It is my deliberate opinion that the false philosophy which has been employed for the exposition of the Calvinistic system, has done more to obstruct the march of Christianity, and to paralyze the saving power of the Gospel, and to raise up and organize around the Church the unnumbered multitude to behold and wonder, and despise and perish, than all other causes beside. * * *

The points to which I allude, as violated by a false philosophy, are the principles of personal identity, — by which the posterity of Adam are distinct from, and not to be confounded with, their ancestor ; the principles of

personal accountability and desert of punishment, that men are not made accountable and punishable for the conduct of Adam, though liable to sin and misery, as its universal consequence ; the nature of sin and holiness, considered not as material qualities or the substance of the soul, or as instincts, but as the spontaneous action of mind under moral government, in the full possession of all the elements of accountability ; and, above all, the doctrines of the decree of God, and the universal certainty of all events to his foreknowledge. To which may be added the nature of the atonement and its extent, and the doctrines of election and reprobation, as they shine in the Bible, and not through the medium of a perverting philosophy.

Whatever of these philosophical theories appertained to the system during the arduous conflict for civil and religious liberty against the papal despotism of modern Europe, men endured, — even swallowed them unhesitatingly, almost unthinkingly, in the presence of a greater evil ; but since the conflict has passed away, and the nature of mind and moral government is better understood, and the numbers who think and will think for themselves multiply, the repugnance to this false philosophy has steadily increased, and will increase, till that which is adventitious and false is relinquished, and the truth is preached in its purity and unbroken power. — *Vide* vol. I., pp. 67, 68.

It seems that the principle of interpretation is claimed ; and that all things which Dr. Beecher conceives to have been either twisted in or left out where the Confession is too full or too empty, and where it will not, in his judgment, produce those effects which popular preaching was designed to accomplish, must be stricken out or explained away. To show to what errors the interpretation of a creed may lead, I will quote a few passages from Edwardean.

It is unusual, in creeds or confessions of faith, to adopt terms so ambiguous as to require an explanation longer than the confession itself. The confessions of faith used in our churches are not thus dubious ; but are sufficiently explicit for all the purposes of a confession of faith, without a word of explanation. The above mystery has hitherto remained ; and its solution is a matter of no small difficulty, because it leads into the region of motives and intentions, with which no stranger can intermeddle to advantage or with propriety. But such is the fact, whatever may have

been the motive. The creed in general uses the common and established language of the Calvinistic faith ; and the notes so vary the meaning of the terms as to give the creed a different aspect from that in which this language commonly appears. Taking the creed and the notes in connection, they neutralize each other, so that the whole presents Dr. Taylor as believing nothing at all. In one he says he believes a certain doctrine, in the other he denies it. Or, taking the notes as the explanation of the creed, and Dr. Taylor is exhibited as sailing under false colors, so far as the creed is to be considered his flag. For it seems to mean one thing, and really means another. These views are given hypothetically, and from the external aspects of the transaction, for with the motives I have no concern. To obtain a full view of this mysterious circumstance, it may be expedient to compare some of the articles of this creed with the note appended.

The second article reads thus : “ I believe that the eternal purposes of God extend to all actual events, sin not excepted ; or that God foreordains whatsoever comes to pass, and so executes these purposes as to leave the free moral agency of man unimpaired.” This language, in its common acceptation, — and the meaning has long been settled by uniform usage, — must be considered as a full confession of the independent government of God. On turning to the notes, we find the following explanation : “ But I do not believe that sin can be proved to be the necessary means of the greatest good, and that as such God prefers it to holiness in its stead. But I do believe that holiness, as the means of good, may be better than sin, and that it may be true that God, all things considered, prefers holiness to sin, in all instances in which the latter takes place.” In the creed he says he believes that the purposes of God extend to all events, sin not excepted ; and that God foreordains whatsoever comes to pass : but in the notes he says he does not believe it can be proved that God prefers sin to holiness, as the means of good, or that he did not even prefer directly the contrary. Here, one of two things must be true : either Dr. Taylor believes that God purposed and foreordained what he did not prefer, but the contrary of which he chose ; or he (Dr. Taylor) believes what he does not believe *can be proved*, or the contrary of which *may* be true. But why this ambiguity ? If Dr. Taylor believes as he says he does in the note, why not say so in his creed, and put the matter at rest ? Why this broad, full, unqualified confession of divine supremacy in the second article ; and then this mysterious explanation, which leaves the subject of his faith utterly inexplicable ?

In the third article, we find the following confession: "I believe that all mankind, in consequence of the fall of Adam, are born destitute of holiness, and are by nature totally depraved." No one can ask for a more full confession of the original and entire depravity of man than this language, according to long-established usage, conveys. No one, on reading this, would hesitate a moment to pronounce Dr. Taylor orthodox on this point. But what says the appendix? "But I do believe that by the wise and holy constitution of God, all mankind, in consequence of Adam's sin, became sinners by their own act."—pp, 6, 7.

When we say that all mankind are born destitute of holiness, have we been understood to mean that they were born destitute of moral character, neither holy nor sinful, but in the same moral condition with young animals? But this must be Dr. Taylor's meaning, according to his own explanation. He believes that men become sinners by their own *act*, and that an act of self-preference. Consequently, to be born destitute of holiness does not mean to be born sinful, because men must themselves put forth an act of self-preference before they are sinners. If this is Dr. Taylor's sentiment, why did he not say so at first? It was just as easy to have said, in his third article, I believe that all mankind are born destitute of any moral character, in the same moral condition with young animals. This would have been explicit, and have saved all note and comment. Again, when we say that all mankind are by nature totally depraved, what has been the universally received meaning, but that men are from their birth, as derived from Adam, possessed of a sinful propensity, that is in itself a sufficient ground of their condemnation? There can be no question that such has been always the import of this language. And, without his notes, no one would have any doubt that Dr. Taylor meant to be understood in this sense. But no such thing. Nothing is further from his mind. He means something totally diverse, namely, that the physical nature of man is such, that, under the influence of circumstances, he will sin. If this, then, is his meaning, why not say so, — why this play upon words, — this putting on a borrowed dress, when his ideas might have been just as easily clothed in appropriate and intelligible language? — p. 8.

You will probably, by this time, perceive the mystery to which I refer. It is, that Dr. Taylor should thus adopt the decided language of Calvinism in his creed, and explain it another way in his notes. No one questions his right to be an Arminian, or Pelagian, if he chooses; no one wishes to vex him in the free enjoyment of his rights of conscience. But that he

may sail under a false flag, or that he may use the terms of a particular creed to mean directly the opposite of the common acceptation, is seriously questionable. — p. 10.

But, it will be said, probably, that the difference is not respecting the doctrines themselves, but merely about the philosophy of these doctrines, or the theory of explanation. And we shall be told that men may perfectly agree in the facts of religion, and yet differ greatly in the theory of explanation. This may, indeed, be true in some respects, and to some extent; but, when indiscriminately applied, it contains a dangerous sophism, which will subvert every doctrine of the Bible. Take, for example, the case which has been mentioned, if I mistake not, by the author of *Views in Theology*, of Christ's casting out devils. This *fact* was admitted equally by the Jews and the disciples. But they differed in their theory of explanation. The Jews said that he cast out devils by Beelzebub, and the disciples believed that he cast them out by the finger of God. Was there no essential difference? Could the believers in these different theories hold each other in fellowship? What concord hath Christ with Belial? Again, some men agree in the fact that sinners must experience a moral change, of some sort, to be saved. But one believes that the change is to be effected by his own *desperate efforts*, by his changing his own purpose, and transferring his affections from the world to God, under the influence of truth presented by the Holy Spirit. Another believes that this change is a mere external reformation, and passing from the world into the church. Another believes that it is a new creation wrought in the heart by the special and mighty power of God. If you ask either of these men whether he believes in the doctrine of regeneration, he will say, "O yes, certainly." But is there no essential difference in their belief, — will no different results proceed from it, — and can they consistently hold each other in fellowship? The fallacy of this argument consists in assuming that agreement in a term or name is agreement in a fact, or that agreement in some parts of a statement is agreement in the whole. It assumes that those who have the terms regeneration, total depravity or special grace, in their creeds, are agreed in the main facts of religion. But far otherwise is the truth. Difference in the theory of explanation in many cases may involve the vital principles of religion. This is true of the doctrine of free grace, of the justification of men by faith alone, and of the doctrine of the final perseverance of believers. These doctrines, though admitted as to the facts, may be so explained as to involve the subversion of all moral obligation, and the admission of rank Antinomianism. And will this make no

difference in the result? Ought it to be no ground of separation? You see, then, that no confidence can be placed in this new theological alchemy, — this philosopher's stone, which is expected to turn every jarring creed into real gold. This, if adopted, will produce Catholicism to the full. For no heresiarch on earth will refuse to adopt an orthodox creed, if you will allow him to put his own meaning to it, and to explain it in his own way.

For these reasons I have no confidence in the plea which is urged by Dr. Beecher in his letter to Dr. Woods, and which has been so often urged from other quarters. The truth is, we regard the points in debate as essential to the Christian system, and that the manner of explaining them which has been adopted is opening the flood-gates of heresy and infidelity. We cannot, then, in conscience, assent to these speculations, even by our silence. We must, as in duty bound, — for so the Scriptures expressly enjoin in such cases, — bear testimony against these errors. — pp. 22, 23.

I did, indeed, understand him to say, at one time, that he only claimed the right of interpreting these passages of the Confession as the Church herself had interpreted them; but here I remark that the Church, as a Church, never has given any interpretation of her standards; and for this obvious reason, that, when once her principles have been settled and thrown into the form of a Confession, all interpretation is at an end, until she decides to review and alter her creed. The faith she holds stands there in her Confession; which Confession is to be received in the obvious sense of its words, and all who become ministers and rulers in her connection are required to receive that Confession *ex animo*, without explanation. To prove this, I might refer to every adjudicated case on the records of the General Assembly. That body never attempt to give any interpretation of the Church's standards, but simply proceed to compare the language and conduct of individuals therewith. The standards are considered by her as a straight rule, but interpretation can only be required when the straight rule is to be bent so as to make it coincide with every curve or right angle to which it

is applied. Instead of this, the curves and the right angles should be brought alongside the straight rule, and then the discrepancy will at once be obvious to all.

Dr. Beecher, in his sermon, with a view to prove its orthodoxy, refers to certain authorities; which references are made both in the body of the discourse itself, and in the notes. These authorities consist either of what are called by some, standard writers, or standard adjudications. There is, however, but one adjudication mentioned, and that is by the Synod of Dort. It will, however, no doubt, be pleaded, that we are to regard standard writers as interpreters of the Confession of Faith, and that we are at liberty to refer to them as showing what was the real meaning of its framers. But, in all the references contained in Dr. Beecher's book, there is but one solitary allusion to the Confession of Faith, and but a single quotation from any Presbyterian minister. Why this long array of names? Why are we told of Justin Martyr, of Origen, of Cyprian, of Jerome, of Bernard and the Synod of Dort? Why are we referred to Calvin, and Bellamy, and Hopkins, and Smalley, and West, and Strong, and Dwight, neither of whom ever adopted our standards, or preached or published in conformity with them? Unhappily, one Presbyterian minister, and that as sound a man and as ripe a scholar as is to be found in any age,—I mean Dr. Witherspoon,—and he in but one single sentence in all his works, has varied a hair's breadth from the standard he acknowledged; and that single sentence has been seized upon with avidity.

But the appeal is made also to our theological seminaries. We are, it seems, to interpret our standards, not only according to Justin Martyr, and Origen, and Cyprian, and Bernard, but according to the interpretation put upon them

by our seminaries. And why are these quoted? It is according to the old fashion, which prevailed before the Confession of Faith was ever framed, and continued to prevail long afterward. It was the fashion of the day to refer theological questions to the colleges of Oxford and Cambridge, and nobody knows how many more; and what they decided, that was to be the interpretation. Well, let it be so, if it can be; but I will show you something about our seminaries. What does Prof. Stuart hold? He is a professor of high standing in a seminary where multitudes of our young men receive their preparation for the Christian ministry; and I have not heard any one, who came from thence, that did not say that both Prof. Stuart and Dr. Woods advised them to adopt the Confession of Faith; and yet, what were the sentiments which Prof. Stuart publicly preached and afterwards published, in reference to Confessions? I will quote a passage or two from a sermon preached by him at the dedication of Hanover-street church, Boston, in 1826.

What, then, are the peculiarities which distinguish them, and which render it proper to say of them that they meet *in the name of Christ*, or on account of him? A very interesting and a very delicate question; one which, however, my text leads me to make an attempt briefly to answer. If I am not fully, I am at least in some good measure, aware of the responsibility and difficulty of the case. But I am not going to dogmatize. I shall appeal to no councils, no fathers, no creeds, no catechisms, no works of the schoolmen, no labors of acute and metaphysical divines,—in a word, to no human system whatever. All, all of these are made by frail, erring men. They are not of any *binding authority*, and we have a warrant that is sufficient, not to receive them, or any of them, as possessing *such* authority. I advert to the warning of our Saviour, which bids us *call no man master upon earth; for there is one who is our Master that dwelleth in heaven*. — pp. 12, 13.

Now, what is the testimony here? (And Dr. Beecher

adopted the same sentiment.) I object not to the language, but to the application of it. Faithful adherence to a creed, after we have once adopted it, is calling no man master. Professor Stuart says :

Another peculiar trait of Christians, as drawn in the New Testament, is, that they render religious homage to the Saviour.

On this topic, as well as on others, I stand not in this sacred place to descant as a polemic. With human creeds or subtleties, or school distinctions and speculations, I have at present nothing to do. Creeds judiciously composed, supported by Scripture, and embracing essential doctrines only, are useful as a symbol of common faith among churches. But they are not the *basis* of a Protestant's belief; nor should they be regarded as the *vouchers* for it. — pp. 24, 25.

So much for the authority of this seminary.

But now let us go to another seminary, and hear what language it holds. I quote from a book entitled, "A Plea for United Christian Action," by R. H. Bishop, D.D.

To what an extent diversity of opinion as to doctrines exists among the ministers of the Presbyterian Church of the present generation, very few, I am persuaded, are prepared to say with any degree of exactness. But were we to compare the present state of opinion with what is known to have been the state of opinion among the divines of a former generation, who are now admitted to have been orthodox, the result likely would be, that we are not more divided on any of the leading doctrines of the Westminster Confession of Faith than the fathers of that age themselves were. Baxter and Owen, for instance, are readily appealed to by almost every minister of the Presbyterian Church, as standards of correct theological opinion; and yet, these men have given very different explanations of some of the most important doctrines of the Westminster Confession, and neither of these men went in all things with the assembly. Nor have we any reason to believe that the divines of the assembly themselves, in their final vote upon the most of the articles in the Confession, were agreed upon any other principle than the principle of compromise. An approximation towards unity of opinion, as the best modes of expressing our individual

views of divine truth, is all that ever can be obtained in our adherence to a public creed. — p. 18.

If this be true, we must forever live in disobedience to that command of the Bible which enjoins all Christians to “speak the same things.”

And now, Sir, as part of my argument, I beg leave to read some passages of my reply to Dr. Bishop.

Has Dr. Bishop yet to learn that the Assembly of Divines did not meet of their own accord ; that they were permitted to discuss no subject but what was proposed to them by Parliament ; that they were carefully watched by lords and commons, to see that they did not transcend their commission ; that they sat long, and carefully investigated every subject committed to their consideration ; that when they gave “their final vote” upon each article, they gave *that vote* upon *principle*, and not upon *compromise* ; that they were all at liberty, when their labors were ended, and the assembly was dissolved, to adopt the Confession of Faith, catechisms and government, or not, as they pleased ; and that Owen, and Baxter, and Usher, and many others, never adopted the standards of the Presbyterian Church ? Why, Sir, do you amuse yourself and deceive your hearers by illustrations drawn from the theological differences of such men ?

To show that there was no *compromise* in the votes of the Assembly of Divines, I need only cite one or two cases. The assembly were unanimously of opinion that “baptism is rightly administered by pouring or sprinkling water upon the person.” But some members thought that dipping or immersion ought to be allowed as “*a mode* of baptism.” On this subject the assembly were divided, and the moderator gave the casting vote against immersion. They all agreed that “pouring or sprinkling” was right. But twenty-four out of forty-nine thought immersion might be allowed as “*a mode* of baptism.” When they were so equally divided upon “*a mode*” of external ordinance, and no *compromise* could be had, and when the majority inserted in the book that “dipping the person in water is not necessary,” but that “baptism as ordained by Christ is the *washing with water* by sprinkling or pouring water upon the person, in the name of the Father, &c.,” can any sober-minded man believe they would *compromise* the essential truths of salvation ?

Take another case. The Assembly of Divines, of Westminster, was, at

first, composed of Episcopalians, Erastians, Independents and Presbyterians. I know not that any of the Anabaptists, Neonomians, or Antinomians, were members. The Parliament sent an order "that the Assembly of Divines and others should forthwith confer, and treat among themselves, of such a discipline and government as may be most agreeable to God's Holy Word, and to deliver their advice touching the same, to both houses of Parliament, with all convenient speed." A plan was proposed, in order to unite all parties, namely, that every bishop should be independent, and that synods and councils should be for concord, and not for government. Archbishop Usher was agreed to this plan. But no *compromise* could be obtained. The Presbyterian form of church government was adopted. I find no case of *compromise*, but in regard to the Solemn League and Covenant. The Scots' commissioners were instructed "to promote the extirpation of popery, prelacy, heresy, schisms, scepticism and idolatry, and to endeavor an union between the two kingdoms, in one confession of faith, one form of church government, and one directory of worship."

The solemn league and covenant was to pave the way for all this, and was to be considered the safeguard of religion and liberty. This league was adopted in Scotland, none opposing it but the king's commissioners. When it was presented to the two houses of Parliament, they referred it to the Assembly of Divines, where it met with opposition.

"Dr. Featly declared he durst not abjure prelacy absolutely, because he had sworn to obey his bishop in all things lawful and honest; and therefore proposed to qualify the second article thus: 'I will endeavor the extirpation of popery, and all anti-Christian, tyrannical, or independent prelacy;' but it was carried against him. Dr. Burgess objected to several articles, and was not without some difficulty persuaded to subscribe, after he had been suspended." This looks very much like the days of *compromise*, does it not? Yet, there was a compromise. Mr. Gataker and *many others* declared for primitive episcopacy, or for one stated president, with his presbyters to govern every church, and refused to subscribe till a parenthesis was inserted, declaring what sort of prelacy was to be abjured.

The Scots, who had been introduced into the assembly, were for abjuring episcopacy as simply unlawful; but the English divines were generally against it. The English pressed chiefly for a civil league, but the Scots would have a religious one, to which the English were *obliged* to yield, taking care, at the same time, to leave a door open for a latitude of interpretation. Here was a *compromise*. And what was the door of "latitude of interpretation"? It was this: The English inserted the phrase "of

reforming according to the Word of God ;” by which they thought themselves secure from the inroads of Presbytery. The Scots inserted the words “ according to the practice of the best reformed churches,” in which they were confident their discipline must be included. Here was a *compromise* from necessity. The English were obliged to adopt a religious league and covenant, or not obtain the assistance of the Scots in a war which they were carrying on in defence of civil and religious liberty. As your reading is much more extensive and minute than mine, I beg you to point out the instances where compromises were made, and a latitude of interpretation allowed on points of doctrine. I believe it will be a difficult task for you, or any member of the New School, to do this. And if this be not done, I hope to hear no more about *compromising* the truths of God. — pp. 9, 10.

What I wish to impress upon the mind of every member of this court is, that it is out of place to quote the opinions of men as standard writers, and interpret the Confession of Faith by them. The opinions of men, on the contrary, must conform to the standard as to a straight line. Still more absurd is it to quote men who never adopted our standards at all. Yet Dr. Bishop refers us to Baxter and Owen, who gave “ very different explanations of some of the most important doctrines of the Westminster Confession,” as Dr. Bishop affirms. What have these different explanations to do with the Confession of Faith? If men do not adopt the Confession, it is obvious their opinions have nothing to do with it; and if they do adopt it, and then give opinions different from it, their creed should be brought up, proposition by proposition, line by line, word by word, to the straight line, that their crooks and turnings may be discovered. I will here state but one case in illustration. I published a sermon on Imputation. When its orthodoxy was questioned, I wanted my sermon laid side by side with the Confession of Faith. The editor of the *New York Evangelist* reviewed

that sermon ; and, in the course of his review, what does he say ? That Dr. Woods advised his pupils, if they should change their theological views, still to retain the same language. But that editor himself, with more honesty, denies both language and thing. If he has falsified Dr. Woods, he alone is responsible for it.

[Professor BIGGS inquired for the copy of the *Evangelist* to which Dr. Wilson referred. But the doctor replied that he had had only a borrowed copy, which was not now in his possession.]

The editor of the *Evangelist* says that he agrees with me, and I with him, as to the sense of the standards ; but that I, and all who hold in sentiment with me, are absurd. Now, I think that the editor is quite as orthodox as those who, while they contradict the doctrine of the standard, still retain its language ; and, while he is equally orthodox, he is a little more honest. Yes, sir, I love that man, though I hate his errors ; I love him for his frankness, and for his honesty. He comes plump up to the mark, and speaks out what he means.

To sum up what I have to say on this subject, I deny the justice of this claim of interpretation, for the following reasons :

(1.) Because, when a Confession of Faith is settled, interpretation is at an end ; until it becomes unsettled, and a resolution is formed to reconsider and alter it.

(2.) Because no one is compelled to adopt the Confession of Faith ; and those who do are bound to adopt it in its obvious, unexplained sense.

(3.) Where the right of interpretation is claimed and exercised, it introduces endless disputes ; and men will use an

orthodox language, and still teach error by explaining away the language they use.

(4.) The judicatories of the Church, in giving decisions upon erroneous opinions, never explain the standards, but simply compare the language of which complaint is made with the language of the book. All the decided cases have brought alleged error by the side of the standards in their obvious language. Witness the decisions in the cases of Balch, Davis, Stone, Craighead, and the Cumberland Presbyterians. The compromise was adopted only in the case of Barnes.

You sit here as judges and jurors. As jurors, you decide the facts; as judges, you compare the facts with the law in its obvious meaning,—that is, as unexplained.

5. Duty compels me to notice a fifth obstacle to a right decision in this case; and which is found in the real condition of this court. I feel, Sir, that I am speaking on a delicate subject. I hope I shall speak so as not to give offence.

[Mr. RANKIN here interposed, and inquired whether it was in order for Dr. Wilson to impugn the integrity of the Presbytery.

The *Moderator* replied that it would not be in order, but advised Mr. Rankin to wait until he heard what Dr. Wilson had to say.]

Dr. WILSON said that he had no wish to impugn the motives of any man. But it was known that, at this time, and ever since Dr. Beecher had been received into the Presbytery, there was a large majority of its members who coincided with him in his theological views. While some, with pain and with great reluctance, but for conscience' sake, are constrained to oppose them; others have taken him by the hand, circulated his sermons, praised his works, and held him up as

the first theologian of his day. Could it be supposed or expected that brethren in such a situation would be willing to bring up Dr. Beecher to the standards of the Church, and try him and his works by that rule? In condemning him, must they not condemn themselves? And was it to be expected that they should be willing to commit suicide?

[Mr. RANKIN again interposed, and declared that such language was wholly inadmissible.

Dr. BEECHER said that he wished Dr. Wilson to be permitted to say all he had to say on that topic.]

Dr. WILSON replied that he was done; he had nothing more to say respecting it.

6. A sixth obstacle is found in the fact that many orthodox and excellent sentiments had been preached and published by Dr. Beecher. All this he most freely and cheerfully admitted. But, said he, the question is, when we find orthodox sentiments contained in a certain book, but also find thrown in and linked in, and (to use an expression of Dr. Beecher's) "twisted in," with these orthodox sentiments, a set of most heretical and pernicious opinions, what is it but a concealing of poison amidst wholesome aliment? Is not the poison the more dangerous, from the inviting food with which it is surrounded? And can anything be worse than the practice of such artifice? Sir, on this subject let me show you a book. It is entitled "The Gospel Plan," by Wm. C. Davis; and in this book may be found some of the finest possible passages, both as to the eloquence of the language and the soundness and orthodoxy of the sentiments they convey. There is a great deal of such sentiment, and presented in the ablest and most convincing manner. In fact, the greater part of the book is of this character. Yet this book contains the most pernicious

heresy. And where is the poison to be found? In comparatively but a few pages, though in a covert manner it is wrought into many more. And what was the fate of Wm. C. Davis? He was convicted of heresy, and suspended from the ministry. But did the Presbytery which tried him read this whole work of six hundred pages on his trial, in order to find out the error? No, Sir; they extracted eight propositions, which were short, concise, and decidedly erroneous. Of these I will give you two as a specimen; and one of these, in the self-same words, is contained in Dr. Beecher's sermon on the Native Character of Man. The proposition is, that God could not make Adam or any other creature either holy or unholy. And the sentiment is, that where there has been as yet no choice, there can be nothing in the creature either good or bad. And what says Dr. Beecher in his sermon? He declares that no action can be either holy or unholy, unless there is understanding, conscience and a choice. The other proposition is, that no just law ever condemns or crimiates a man for not doing that which he cannot do. And how often was that very sentiment asserted and repeated, iterated and reiterated, in the sermon which was read to us yesterday? I shall not pretend to say, but leave the court to decide.

Having now removed, or at least attempted to remove, out of the way, what I conceive to be important obstacles in the way of a just decision, I shall now proceed to examine the charges themselves, *seriatim*, with their several specifications, and the evidence in support of them.

The court here took a recess of ten minutes.

FIRST CHARGE.

The court being reassembled, Dr. Wilson proceeded to read again the first charge. [See it on page 85.]

He then quoted the Confession of Faith, ch. VI. sects. 3, 4, 6:

III. They being the root of all mankind, the guilt of this sin was imputed, and the same death in sin and corrupted nature conveyed to all their posterity, descending from them by ordinary generation.

IV. From this original corruption, whereby we are utterly indisposed, disabled, and made opposite to all good, and wholly inclined to all evil, do proceed all actual transgressions.

VI. Every sin, both original and actual, being a transgression of the righteous law of God, and contrary thereunto, doth, in its own nature, bring guilt upon the sinner, whereby he is bound over to the wrath of God, and curse of the law, and so made subject to death, with all miseries, spiritual, temporal, and eternal.

Also the Larger Catechism, questions 26, 27:

Q. 26. How is original sin conveyed from our first parents unto their posterity?

A. Original sin is conveyed from our first parents unto their posterity by natural generation, so as all that proceed from them in that way are conceived and born in sin.

Q. 27. What misery did the fall bring upon mankind?

A. The fall brought upon mankind the loss of communion with God, his displeasure and curse; so as we are by nature children of wrath, bond-slaves to Satan, and justly liable to all punishments in this world, and that which is to come.

He next read the passage from Dr. Beecher's sermon on the Native Character of Man, beginning (page 72) "A depraved nature is by many understood, &c.," and ending (page 74) "The fool has said in his heart, no God."

The preceding part of this sermon was intended to prove that man is not religious by nature. It will be recollected that throughout the whole of what precedes this passage there is a mixture of that which has a wrong tendency, and is

against the standards of our Church. For, let it not be forgotten, that when the original proposition has been sustained, this paragraph is introduced for the purpose of explanation, in order to show what the writer means by the term accountability, in those passages where the meaning of that term is not so explicit. And the explanation goes to show that the sentiment of the writer is, that *there is a period in human existence when the creature is neither good nor bad*. Now, the question is, whether this sentiment does or does not coincide with the standards of our Church. Is it not at variance with them?—nay, does it not positively contradict them? The question must be answered in the affirmative, and the standards of our Church must be sustained. I might easily go on to show that, according to this doctrine, the condition in which children are placed under the moral government of God is such as fits them neither for heaven nor for hell; for, according to Dr. Beecher, they are neither holy nor sinful. In contradiction to which, I might as easily prove, according to the doctrine of the Apostle Paul, and the faith of all sound Calvinists, that they are under condemnation, although they have not sinned according to the similitude of Adam's transgression. Our standards keep up a constant distinction between original sin, the turpitude conveyed by it, and the punishment incurred previous to the time of volition on one hand, and actual sin on the other, as proceeding from the depraved and corrupted nature of the children of Adam, who are all born under a broken covenant, and whose fallen nature is inherited, without their knowledge or consent, from the federative relation in which they stand to Adam, their representative and first father.

As to the first sin in any man, there are none who deny that it is voluntary. But our standards teach that it is never-

theless only a corrupt stream proceeding from a corrupt fountain. This the sermon denies; and holds that, previous to this, the creature is neither good nor bad. Let us here apply our Saviour's own rule of judgment. He says that a good tree brings forth good fruit; and a corrupt tree brings forth evil fruit. But a tree which is neither good nor bad can produce neither good nor bad fruit. If it be true that actions proceeding from any nature are in accordance with the nature from which they proceed, then that which proceeds from a nature neither holy nor sinful, can itself be neither sinful nor holy.

But it is said that those who deny this, place mind and matter upon the same footing; and that the error of those who think that men are born in sin arises from supposing that the nature of mind and matter is the same. Hear what the sermon says on this subject:

A depraved nature is by many understood to mean a constitutional nature, sinful prior to choice, and producing sinful choice by an unavoidable necessity, as fountains of water pour forth their bitter streams, or trees produce their bitter fruit. The mistake lies in a virtual implication that the nature of matter and mind are the same; whereas they are entirely different. The nature of matter excludes powers of perception, understanding and choice. But the nature of accountable mind includes them all. Neither a holy or a depraved nature, in the strict sense, is *possible*, without acts of understanding, conscience and choice. — pp. 72, 73.

Does the writer mean to say that none of the animals has a depraved nature? that the serpent, the vulture, the tiger, have not a nature that is depraved? This he does not mean. But, if they have, whence did they derive it? whence, but from the curse of the fall? Would there have been any evil among the animals, if God had not said, "Cursed is the ground for thy sake"? Still there is a wide difference between the rela-

tion which these inferior beings sustain to Adam and that which his own children sustain to him. Yet, according to the sermon, this is not so.

But I forbear. The court has the sermon in its hands, and is as competent as I can be, to compare it with the standards of the Church, and to see how far they agree or disagree. Nor can they fail to see that this is but one part of a system which a logical mind must carry out to other and most important results. What these results are, I shall show hereafter.

SECOND CHARGE.

Dr. Wilson now again read the second charge. [See it on page 86.] Also the following from the Confession of Faith, ch. IX. sec. 3 :

Man, by his fall into a state of sin, hath wholly lost all ability of will to any spiritual good accompanying salvation ; so as a natural man, being altogether averse from that good, and dead in sin, is not able, by his own strength, to convert himself, or to prepare himself thereunto.

Dr. Wilson also read the following from the Larger Catechism, Quest. 25 ; and Shorter Cat., Questions 101, 103 :

Q. Wherein consisteth the sinfulness of that estate whereinto man fell ?

A. The sinfulness of that estate whereinto man fell consisteth in the guilt of Adam's first sin, the want of that righteousness wherein he was created, and the corruption of his nature, whereby he is utterly indisposed, disabled, and made opposite unto all that is spiritually good, and wholly inclined to all evil, and that continually ; which is commonly called Original Sin, and from which do proceed all actual transgressions.

Q. What do we pray for in the first petition ?

A. In the first petition (which is, Hallowed be thy name) we pray that God would enable us and others to glorify him in all that whereby he maketh himself known ; and that he would dispose of all things to his own glory.

Q. What do we pray for in the third petition ?

A. In the third petition (which is, Thy will be done on earth, as it is in

heaven) we pray that God, by his grace, would make us able and willing to know, obey, and submit to his will in all things, as the angels do in heaven.

With respect to what is here said concerning Free Will, the declarations of our standards are proved by facts recorded in the Scripture. The first declaration is proved by the fact, that Adam was not forced to eat the forbidden fruit; the second is proved from the fact, that Adam at first did good, and then did evil. And the third is no less proved by fact and daily observation: for men never do convert themselves, nor prepare themselves for being converted. They are wholly indisposed and unable, from the fall, to do either. But the framers of this confession, speaking of the will, say that the inability is an inability of the will. But, in the questions of the catechism, and through the standards generally, they take a just distinction between ability and will. It is, indeed, said that man is unwilling to keep the commandments of God, but they give a fuller explanation when they come to state what it is we ought to pray for; for there they teach the Church that she is to ask God to make her both able and willing to keep his commandments. And I have cited these passages to prevent any cavil that might find seeming justification in the phraseology of this chapter on the will. From the words of the chapter alone, it might be argued, that though man has lost the will, he still retains the natural ability to keep the divine law. But what the chapter does mean on this subject is afterwards more fully explained, and from these subsequent explanations it is perfectly clear that our standards deny in a fallen man both ability and will to do anything spiritually good.

Dr. Wilson now read again the second specification. [See it on page 87.]

He then read an extract from Dr. Beecher's sermon on Dependence and Free Agency.

The sinner can be accountable, then, and he is accountable, for his impenitence and unbelief, though he will not turn, and God may never turn him, because he is able and only unwilling to do what God commands, and which, being done, would save his soul. Indeed, to be able and unwilling to obey God, is the only possible way in which a free agent can become deserving of condemnation and punishment. So long as he is able and willing to obey there can be no sin; and the moment the ability of obedience ceases, the commission of sin becomes impossible. — p. 22.

Here the question naturally arises, How does it happen that such multitudes of the human family suffer so much as they do previous to the possession of the knowledge, conscience, and volition, which is declared to be essential to all sin? He then read from pages 31, 32, 36.

And the more clear the light of his conviction shines, the more distinct is the sinner's perception that he is — not destitute of capacity, but inflexibly unwilling to obey the Gospel. Does the Spirit of God produce convictions which are contrary to fact, and contrary to the teachings of the Bible? Never. What, then, when he moves on to that work of sovereign mercy, which no sinner ever resisted, and without which no one ever submitted to God, — what does he do? When he pours the daylight of omniscience upon the soul, and comes to search out what is amiss, and put in order that which is out of the way, what impediment to obedience does he find to be removed, and what work does he perform? He finds only the will perverted, and obstinately persisting in its sinful choice; and in the day of his power all he accomplishes is, to make the sinner willing. — p. 31.

It is not grace resisted alone, but the ability of man perverted and abused, that brings down upon him guilt and condemnation. The influence of the Spirit belongs wholly to the remedial system. Whereas ability commensurate with requirement is the equitable and everlasting foundation of the moral government of God. — p. 32.

The facts in the case are just the other way. The doctrine of man's free agency and natural ability as the ground of obligation and guilt, and of his impotency of will by reason of sin, has been the received doctrine of the orthodox church in all ages. — p. 36.

To prove that this is the doctrine of the orthodox church, we have here a long array of names of men, the most of whom never so much as professed to embrace our confession; and not a single item from that book which Dr. Beecher so loudly eulogized, and pressed with so much emphasis to his heart.

Dr. Wilson then read the fifth specification. [See it on page 87.] He also read the Confession of Faith, ch. XIII. sec. 1, and ch. XIV. sec. 1.

They who are effectually called and regenerated, having a new heart and a new spirit created in them, are further sanctified, really and personally, through the virtue of Christ's death and resurrection, by his word and Spirit dwelling in them; the dominion of the whole body of sin is destroyed, and the several lusts thereof are more and more weakened and mortified, and they more and more quickened and strengthened in all saving graces, to the practice of true holiness, without which no man shall see the Lord. — Ch. XIII. sec. 1.

The grace of faith, whereby the elect are enabled to believe to the saving of their souls, is the work of the Spirit of Christ in their hearts, and is ordinarily wrought by the ministry of the word: by which also, and by the administration of the sacraments, and prayer, it is increased and strengthened. — Ch. XIV. sec. 1.

Also the Larger Catechism, Question 72:

Q. 72. What is justifying faith?

A. Justifying faith is a saving grace, wrought in the heart of a sinner by the Spirit and Word of God, whereby he, being convinced of his sin and misery, and of the disability in himself and all other creatures to recover him out of his lost condition, not only assenteth to the truth of the promise of the Gospel, but receiveth and resteth upon Christ and his righteousness, therein held forth, for pardon of sin, and for the accepting and accounting of his person righteous in the sight of God for salvation.

He then read from Dr. Beecher's sermon, page 43.

One would think that a subject of God's glorious government, who can but will not obey him, might appear to himself and to the universe much more accountable, and much more guilty, in the day of judgment, than one whose capacity of obedience had been wholly annihilated by the sin of

Adam. Does it illustrate the glory of God's justice more to punish the helpless and impotent than to punish the voluntary but incorrigible?

In answer to this, it might be said, that, for God to punish the innocent and the helpless, would exhibit his character only in the light of a tyrant. But, as he does punish the infants of our race, it remains for Dr. Beecher to reconcile what he here says with the standards of our Church. Where is there a single sentence in those standards which contains the assertion that all capacity of obedience has been *annihilated* by the sin of Adam? And here I may remark, that the disciples of the new school, when speaking on the subject of original sin, either deny or caricature it.

Dr. Wilson here read further extracts from Dr. Beecher's sermon.

Also from the *Christian Spectator* for 1825, p. 100, as follows :

Men are free agents ; in the possession of such faculties, and placed in such circumstances, as to render it practicable for them to do whatever God requires ; reasonable that he should require it ; and fit that he should inflict literally the entire penalty of disobedience. Such ability is here intended as lays a perfect foundation for government by law, and for rewards and punishment according to deeds.

The Presbytery now adjourned. Closed with prayer.

FRIDAY MORNING.

The Presbytery met, and opened with prayer.

CHARGE THIRD.

Dr. Wilson read the third charge. [See it on page 88.] Also the Confession of Faith, ch. VI. secs. 2, 4, ch. IX. 3.

L. C. Ques. 25 [quoted page 147], 149, 190. S. C. Ques. 101, 103 [quoted page 147].

II. By this sin they fell from their original righteousness and communion with God, and so became dead in sin, and wholly defiled in all the faculties and parts of soul and body.

IV. From this original corruption, whereby we are utterly indisposed, disabled, and made opposite to all good, and wholly inclined to all evil, do proceed all actual transgressions.

III. Man, by his fall into a state of sin, hath wholly lost all ability of will to any spiritual good accompanying salvation ; so as a natural man, being altogether averse from that good, and dead in sin, is not able, by his own strength, to convert himself, or to prepare himself thereunto.

Q. 149. Is any man able perfectly to keep the commandments of God ?

A. No man is able, either of himself, or by any grace received in this life, perfectly to keep the commandments of God : but doth daily break them in thought, word and deed.

Q. 190. What do we pray for in the first petition ?

A. In the first petition (which is, *Hallowed be thy name*), acknowledging the utter inability and indisposition that is in ourselves, and all men, to honor God aright, we pray that God would, by his grace, enable incline us and others to know, to acknowledge, and highly to esteem him, his titles, attributes, ordinances, word, works, and whatsoever he is pleased to make himself known by ; and to glorify him in thought, word and deed ; that he would prevent and remove atheism, ignorance, idolatry, profaneness, and whatsoever is dishonorable to him ; and, by his overruling providence, direct and dispose all things to his own glory.

He then quoted Dr. Beecher's sermon :

When he pours the daylight of omniscience upon the soul, and comes to search out what is amiss, and put in order that which is out of the way, what impediment to obedience does he find to be removed, and what work does he perform ? He finds only the will perverted, and obstinately persisting in its sinful choice ; and in the day of his power all he accomplishes is to make the sinner willing. — p. 31.

The idea here conveyed is, that the Spirit of God makes a sinner willing in no other way than by presenting truth to

his mind in a clearer manner than the preacher can exhibit it. He here read from the sermon, p. 22.

So long as the sinner is able and willing to obey, there can be no sin ; and the moment the ability of obedience ceases, the commission of sin becomes impossible.

Dr. Beecher here teaches Perfection in two ways. For it follows that when any creature has rendered himself incapable of doing good he can commit no sin. And, according to this doctrine, the devils must be perfectly sinless, ever since the first sin which they committed ; for I suppose none will deny that by their first sin they rendered themselves incapable of good : and, the ability ceasing, all sin ceased likewise. But Dr. Beecher, in the first part of his sermon, maintains that the sinner is naturally able to keep the whole law of God, and here he declares that the Spirit makes him willing to do and that while he is both able and willing there can be no sin. And how can there be ? The conclusion is perfectly logical. It is entirely irrefragable, and follows by necessary consequence from the premises.

And, on this part of my subject, I will turn to that part of the specification which declares that some of the Perfectionists have been inmates of Lane Seminary ; and I now call upon the clerk to read the testimony which has been taken before Presbytery, and recorded, touching that fact.

The testimony was here read accordingly. [See it on pp. 95, 96, 100, 101, 102, 103, 109, 110, 111.]

After listening to this testimony, I suppose there can be no doubt of the truth of the statement, that some of the Perfectionists were inmates of Lane Seminary. For, if this was not the fact, and if the leaven of that heresy was not operating there, and if no fear was entertained that it might

increase, and thereby affect the interests of that institution, why was it necessary for Dr. Beecher to give his students a warning against it? For it seems that the letter to Weld was not known in the seminary. The witnesses met with it elsewhere. And what says Mr. Weed? That although the students expressed no decided opinion in favor of that system in presence of Dr. Beecher, yet he knew of many who avowed to each other the opinion that every exercise of the mind was either entirely holy or entirely sinful. If we are to credit his word,—and no one thinks of doubting it,—then the fact is established, not only from Dr. Beecher's finding it necessary to deliver a set lecture in opposition to those sentiments, but from the fact that many of the students avowed them. No one will deny the propriety of young men in a theological seminary investigating every subject of a theological kind. That is all right and proper. But when we have it in evidence that many of them received and avowed the sentiment, that every exercise of the mind is either entirely holy or entirely sinful, does it not show that they denied any such warfare in the bosom of a Christian as is spoken of in the Confession of Faith and in the Scriptures? God forbid that I should speak a word against Christian Perfection! I well know that it is one of the precious doctrines of the Bible; and, when properly understood, it is what I long to feel for myself, and to see far more prevalent than it is among us. But while I see Perfection enjoined in the Bible, and while I hear holy men earnestly praying for its attainment, and while I can say that I delight in the law of God after the inward man, I am nevertheless constrained to add, that I see another law in my members which wars against this law of my mind. I can say that to will is present with me; but how to perform that which is good I find not. O,

wretched man that I am,— who shall deliver me from the body of this death? Now, I would ask, if I had full ability before I was converted, what has become of it? I have it not now. Even when I will, I cannot perform. There is a law in my members which wars against the law in my mind, and brings me into captivity to the law of sin which is in my members; and who shall deliver me? I thank God through Jesus Christ our Lord. We are complete in him. And this is Christian Perfection; but not that Perfection which is taught in this sermon, or held by the students in Lane Seminary, or by the Perfectionists of New Haven.

With respect to these Perfectionists, let me do them justice. They are, for the most part, highly talented men, and men of amiable dispositions; but they are misguided. And how came they to be misguided? I shall show. The fact that such young men were in Lane Seminary I have not charged as a crime upon Dr. Beecher. Can a professor hinder the presence of corrupt students among the young men under his charge? It is, indeed, a serious question, whether such ought to be excluded. Dr. Mason was the only man who ever expelled a student from a theological institution for holding heretical opinions. And has it not been made a subject of grave complaint, that there were in Princeton Seminary some who came there with the express view of making proselytes to false doctrine? I never alleged it as any offence in Dr. Beecher. And I introduced it merely to show that Dr. Beecher's sentiments, whatever he might have intended, do lead directly to such results. No man will pretend to blame him for warning his students against sentiments, or for delivering a set lecture in opposition to them. But where is the consistency of such a course? He advocates a theory which naturally leads to this; a theory which men do under-

stand; which men not only of cultivated minds, but of very devotional feeling, have understood, and have perceived that it does lead to such consequences. If Dr. Beecher had come plainly up and openly renounced those doctrines to which his system led,—if he had declared, with manly frankness, that, though he had been the unhappy instrument of leading those who confided in him to the adoption of such opinions, he nevertheless repudiated and condemned them,—this would have been consistent and praiseworthy. But, when he suffered his sentiments still to stand unobliterated and not denied in the text of his sermon, and then proceeded to warn these young men against that which was the necessary consequence, it was, to say the least, not a very consistent course. All can see, who have eyes to see, the perfect incongruity.

We heard a good deal yesterday concerning what these Perfectionists hold. They publish a newspaper called *The Perfectionist*, the editors of which, Messrs. Whitmore and Buckingham, are responsible for everything that appears in it. Let these gentlemen speak for themselves. Here Dr. Wilson read the following quotation :

We believe the Gospel is emphatically glad tidings of redemption from sin, and Christianity is distinguished from the dispensation which preceded it chiefly by the fact that it brings in everlasting righteousness. Hence :

We believe that sinners are not Christians : we object not to calling some of them Jewish saints, or sinful believers, or unconverted disciples, or servants of God, as distinguished from sons ; but we affirm that they are out of Christ ; for “ he that abideth in him sinneth not ; he that sinneth hath not seen him, neither known him.”

Now, it is proper to know how these young brethren (I still call them brethren, for they are men of much mind and

talent, and in many respects of good feeling) should fall into sentiments like these, and should be so confident in the maintaining of them. [The same confidence that was displayed thirty years ago by the Shakers, in maintaining theirs.] They will tell you. Here Dr. Wilson read as follows :

COLLOQUY. — NO. 1.

B. — I understand you profess to be perfect, — how is this ?

Answer. — Christ is made unto me wisdom, righteousness, sanctification and redemption. In the Lord have I righteousness and strength. I will greatly rejoice in the Lord, my soul shall be joyful in my God ; for he hath clothed me with the garments of salvation, he hath covered me with a robe of righteousness. We are complete or perfect IN HIM. — 1 Cor. 1 : 30. Isa. 45 : 24 ; 61 : 10. Col. 2 : 10.

B. — But don't you think we ought to have a righteousness of our own ?

Ans. — All our righteousnesses are as filthy rags. For they, being ignorant of God's righteousness, and going about to establish *their own* righteousness, have not submitted themselves to the righteousness of God. Not having *mine own* righteousness, which is the law, but that which is through the faith of Christ, the righteousness which is of God by faith. — Isa. 64 : 6. Rom. 10 : 3. Phil. 3 : 9.

B. — I have always understood that there is no perfection in this life.

Ans. — Herein is our *love made PERFECT*, that we may have holiness in the day of judgment ; because AS HE [Christ] IS, *so are we* IN THIS WORLD. Ye are witnesses, and GOD ALSO, how HOLILY and JUSTLY and UNBLAMABLY we behaved ourselves among you that believe. Be ye followers of me, even as I also am of Christ. As many of us as be *perfect* be thus minded. — 1 John 4 : 17. 1 Thess. 2 : 10. 1 Cor. 11 : 1. Phil. 3 : 15—17.

B. — But don't you think it savors of pride to say you live without sin ?

Ans. — It is the *Lord's doing*, and it is marvellous in our eyes. Not that we are sufficient of ourselves to *think anything* as of ourselves ; but our sufficiency is of God. I am crucified with Christ ; nevertheless I live, yet NOT I, but *Christ liveth in me*. Lord, thou wilt ordain peace for us ; for THOU hast wrought ALL OUR WORKS IN US. By the grace of God I am that I am. Not of works, lest any man should boast. In God we boast all the day long, and praise his name forever. What have we that we have

not received? now, if we receive all as a free gift, why should we glory, as if we had not received it? — Matt. 21 : 42. 2 Cor. 3 : 5. Gal. 2 : 20. Isa. 26 : 12. 1 Cor. 15 : 10. Eph. 2 : 3. Psal. 54 : 8. 1 Cor. 4 : 7.

B. — Admitting that you are free from sin, would it not be better to avoid professing it?

Ans. — With the heart man believeth unto righteousness, and with the mouth *confession* is made unto salvation. Go home to thy friends and *tell them* how great things the Lord hath done for thee, and hath had compassion on thee. And he went his way, and *published* throughout the whole city how great things Jesus had done unto him. No man, when he hath lighted a candle, covereth it with a vessel, or putteth it under a bed; but setteth it on a candlestick, that they which enter in may see the light. I have not *hid* thy *righteousness* within my heart. I have *declared* thy *faithfulness* and thy *salvation*; I have not *concealed* thy *loving-kindness* and thy *truth* from the *great congregation*. — Rom. 10 : 10. Mark 5 : 19. Luke 8 : 16, 39. Ps. 50 : 10

This speaks language which cannot be misunderstood. Whatever may be their conceptions with respect to the Reformation, they give the Reformers no credit save for having produced a reform in that which was anti-Christianity; and they assert that God then raised up others who have produced a true reformation, and who have carried it on until this day, when it has issued in that new divinity, of which we have all heard so much. This new divinity, it seems, according to their own account, was the thing which gave them the first stepping-stone; and no wonder,—for, if the premises be true, their argument from them is correct. If it is true that the sinner is able to keep the commandments of God, and if the Spirit makes him willing to keep them, there can be no sin. The inference is most clear and logical; and, if I believed the first position, I would go the whole; nor can there be any consistency in doing otherwise. The friends of the new school must either return and take up the exploded doctrine of human inability, or carry out the opposite scheme, and

avow themselves Perfectionists. Let them publicly abandon their whole system; or let them go forward like honest men, and boldly carry it out to its results.

Lest it should be supposed that the Perfectionists have done Dr. Beecher injustice, by associating his name with that of Mr. Finney, I will show how his course was viewed in New England, by some quotations from the letter of Mr. Rand :

Another reason why you are reckoned as a decisive advocate of new principles is, *the associations you have voluntarily formed*. And here we judge according to the common maxim, that a man is known by the company he keeps. — p. 12.

Some years ago, but after Dr. Taylor had made himself conspicuous as a theorizer in theology, Dr. Beecher had occasion to be absent a few weeks from his people, in a time of religious excitement; and he put Dr. Taylor in his place, to preach and “conduct the revival.” Dr. Taylor did not harshly obtrude his new theories upon the people at that time; but Dr. Beecher was considered, by discerning men, under all the circumstances of the times, as giving distinct evidence of partiality for his views. When the first protracted meeting in Massachusetts was held at Boston, Dr. Taylor did a large portion of the preaching, and was the only minister from abroad who took part in the public exercises. When Dr. Beecher was in New York, on his way to the West, he is understood to have taken frequent occasion to extol Dr. Taylor, as one of the first theologians of the age. And they who are acquainted with consultations, correspondence and other indications of intimacy, have long told us that these two gentlemen were united in promoting the same theological views. — p. 13.

Now, sir, who was Mr. Finney’s principal adviser, coadjutor and confidential friend, from his coming to Boston till he finally left it? I answer, without hesitation, Dr. Beecher. Who *originated* the invitation, I know not. It was extended by Union Church, or their agents. Mr. F. replied, “I am ready to go to Boston, if the ministering brethren are prepared to receive me; otherwise, I must decline.” The question was submitted to the pastors assembled. No very decisive answer was given by most, I believe; but Drs. Beecher and Wisner *expressed their doubts* of the expediency of the measure. But their doubts were soon after removed; and he came, with their express approbation, and the acquiescence of others.

He was immediately made the public preacher for the whole Orthodox Congregational interest in Boston, and a contribution was levied upon the churches to support his family for six months. He held public evening meetings, generally twice a week, in a large and central house. These meetings were uniformly notified in the several congregations on the Sabbath. Some of the pastors usually attended with him, took part in the exercises, gave his notices, and *appeared* to act in perfect concert with him, though he was always the preacher. In these movements, Drs. Beecher and Wisner were more prominent and active than all the others; and Dr. Beecher repeatedly declared in public his full accordance with views which had been advanced. — p. 14.

I have read this to show that it is not without reason Dr. Beecher was connected by the Perfectionists with Dr. Taylor and Mr. Finney. The system held by them all is substantially the same, though they do not all express it so fully as Mr. Finney and Dr. Taylor. The testimony we have heard has established the fact, that some of the Perfectionists were students in Lane Seminary. Dr. Beecher's own book has established the 2d specification. It is now with the court to see what is the nature and amount of my charge. I do not blame him that such students were there; nor do I charge him with being a Perfectionist, for he is not aware of it. I merely charge him with preaching sentiments from which those doctrines naturally flow. And if these sentiments are inconsistent with our standards, then let Dr. Beecher say which of the two he renounces, and to which he adheres.

The Presbytery here took a short recess.

FOURTH CHARGE.

DR. WILSON now read the 4th charge, and 1st specification. [See it on p. 89.] He said that he was not prepared to deny this when he wrote the charge; but he was now fully prepared, from historical evidence, to do so.

I will now give a definition of slander. The verb means to belie, to censure falsely. The noun means false invective, disgrace, reproach, disreputation, ill-name. A slanderer is one who belies another, who lays false charges upon another. These are the definitions of Dr. Johnson; and I will now reduce them all to a scriptural definition, which is contained in the 14th chap. of Numbers, 36 and 37 verses:

And the men, which Moses sent to search the land, who returned, and made all the congregation to murmur against him, by bringing up a slander upon the land; even those men that did bring up the evil report upon the land, died by the plague before the Lord.

Now, I say that Dr. Beecher has, in his writings, brought up an evil report upon the Church of God, and upon those ministers who teach the doctrines of the Confession of Faith. To make his impression the deeper, he has given a caricature of their sentiments. Who that holds the doctrine that a sinner is unable to keep the law of God preaches that men ought to engage in the "impenitent use of means"? Is not this a slander? Yet, from what was read here yesterday, it appears that Dr. Beecher continued to utter this slander, even after the charges had been tabled against him. For he contends that it was part of that false philosophy which was twisted into the creeds of the Reformation. And he further states that revivals have always flourished where his doctrine is preached; or, if any have occurred elsewhere, it has been where the old system has been mitigated in its severity; and that it is other doctrines, and not those of the old system, which, in such cases, have been blessed of God. Sir, this is the slander which has, for years past, been cast upon the old school,—that its advocates are the enemies of revivals, and that they preach doctrines which destroy the souls of men.

What did we hear in this Presbytery when a young brother applied for license? Although his doctrines were admitted to be in accordance with the Confession of Faith, and his licensure could not be withheld, yet it was openly declared that such doctrine never converted men. We are told, by Dr. Beecher, that where the doctrines of human inability to keep the commandments of God, inability to convert ourselves, inability to engage in any holy exercises, have been taught, those churches have remained like Egypt by the side of other churches where the opposite doctrines were inculcated. Yes, Sir, like Egypt in its midnight darkness; like the mountains of Gilboa, without dews of heaven, or fields of offering; or like the valley in Ezekiel's vision, where the bones were very many, and dry, very dry.

Now, Sir, I ask, What has been the true history of the revivals thus produced by the preaching of the doctrines of the new school? It has been just what *The Perfectionist* stated. Such revivals have left the churches cold, barren, and spiritually dead. Such has been the utter sterility experienced in the State of New York, and in some parts of New England, that all vitality is gone, and nothing but some new dispensation of Divine grace can renovate the face of the Church. Sir, what has been the history of these revivals on this side of the mountains, in our own region, and within the bounds of our own Presbytery? Wherever the doctrines of the new school have prevailed, and artificial excitements have been got up among the churches, there all vital religion has been prostrated, and the churches sunk into a state of death-like apathy and silence; just such as *The Perfectionist* informs us has taken place on the other side of the mountains. But, on the contrary, where the doctrines of the Confession of Faith have been received and faithfully preached,

the churches are growing, are in a state of order and harmony, and spiritual health universally prevails. Now, to bring up an evil report on a simple individual is slander, provided the report be untrue; to say, indeed, that a drunkard is a drunkard, or that a liar is a liar, is no slander, however imprudent the declaration, under some circumstances, may be. But, where the charge is made, and it turns out to be utterly false, it is the crime of slander, and is punished as such. But what is slander upon an individual, when compared with slander directed against the whole Church of God, against the orthodox in every age, against the blessed apostle who first preached the Gospel to the nations, against the martyrs who freely shed their blood to confirm it, and against the company of the reformers who were ready to lay down their lives in its defence? Look, Sir, at that venerable company of Westminster divines,—men whose talents, learning and piety, have been the theme of just admiration from their own age until the present day;—men who took up and investigated the whole system of divine truth,—who continued to sit for six or seven years, and who yet, when they formed their book, put into it this doctrine of the inability of fallen man;—a doctrine which, it is said, the men of the new school have completely demolished, and with respect to which none, according to Dr. Beecher, had ever a distinct apprehension, so as to rise above the mists by which the subject is surrounded, till the time of Edwards, and those who have since followed the track he marked out;—men who seem continually to cry out, “We are the men, and wisdom will die with us.” If this is not bringing up an evil report upon the Church of God, upon the Christian ministry, and upon the whole body of those who are the friends of orthodoxy in this

country, I am quite unable to conceive what ought to be so denominated.

FIFTH CHARGE.

DR. WILSON here read the 5th charge. [See p. 91.]

As the fact here charged has been conceded, I need refer to no proof in its support. Dr. Beecher, however, objects to the introduction of the word "kindred," and has expressed a wish that that word might be erased. To this I shall make no objection, and will only observe that there must be something very wrong when people feel dishonored by their own kin.

The *Moderator* pronounced this remark to be a violation of order.

DR. WILSON said, if it was out of order, he was willing it should be omitted. He thereupon proceeded to read the sixth charge. [See p. 91.]

SIXTH CHARGE.

He commenced his remarks on this charge by quoting Johnson's definition of the terms: "*Hypocrisy*,—dissimulation in respect to moral or religious character;—*Hypocrite*,—a dissembler in morality or religion."

DR. WILSON then read again the 1st specification. [See p. 91.]

Under this specification I shall read from a document produced by Dr. Beecher at the last meeting of Presbytery. He read only a part of it. I wish to read a little more. It is an article from the *Standard*, dated October 20, 1832; and it is not over the signature of J. L. W., although it was said yesterday that Dr. Beecher had read nothing but what had these initials appended to it:

New York, Oct. 20, 1832.

Although I have not had the privilege of much personal intercourse with you, yet I feel as if I were intimately acquainted with you. I am impelled also by existing circumstances to write you, and hope you will ———. I pray that you may have wisdom and grace as you need ——— to glorify God. ——— The men of the new school talk much of love, forbearance and peace, when they are in the minority, and wish to carry their point; but when they have the power, ———. The friends of the Redeemer, however, have nothing to fear. I regret that they should, in any instance, have thought it necessary to contend against ——— with his own weapons. ——— It appears to me that we need only to pursue a straight course, abiding by the Word of God and the constitution of our Church, and leave events with the great Head of the Church. If we are in the minority, we can enter our dissent, solemn protest and remonstrance, and thus preserve a good conscience, and be protected in our rights, by the ———. I, for one, feel less apprehensions than I did, and would discountenance anything like the combination, management and attempts to overreach, as practised by the new party. Let us be firm in our adherence to the cause of truth and righteousness. Let us do our duty as Christians and as ministers of the Gospel, and we are under the broad and impenetrable shield of the *promise* of God. ——— If we are to be outnumbered and outvoted, be it so. ——— has always had a majority. ——— God has always had his witnesses. The Church has always been preserved. ——— Perhaps the Lord may have something better in store for us than we have feared. Perhaps he will prevent the spread of error in that branch of his Church to which we belong. It may be that ——— shall not have a majority in ———. Many in this region who were *on the fence*, who were taken with their apparent zeal and devotedness, and felt inclined to favor their measures, have had their eyes opened, have seen the tendency of their measures, and have been disgusted with the men. They begin to feel the importance of guarding our standards, and are convinced that the matter of difference between ——— is something more than a question about words. ——— The sessions of our Synod have just closed. The doings in several cases were such as to try our strength. We have a large and decided majority of old-school men. The opening sermon was preached by a member from the country, Mr. Thompson, who was in the assembly last spring. It was honest, bold and faithful, — much more so than we were prepared to hear. ——— Most of our time was occupied in rectifying the irregularities of the 3d Presbytery. When that Presbytery was formed,

we expected strange proceedings ; but our expectations have been far exceeded. They have held thirty-five meetings during the year, and have licensed and ordained a very large number of men.

In the judgment of the Synod, expressed by a decided vote, they have violated the constitution in three instances, namely : 1. In dismissing a private member of the Church, a female, over the heads of the Session. ——— The Presbytery gave her a dismission and letter of recommendation to another church, which church would not receive her. So she is still under their care. ———

2. In receiving Mr. Leavitt, of this city, editor of the *Evangelist*, without any credentials whatever. He was introduced to the Presbytery by Dr. Cox, and received on their personal knowledge of him, without a dismission from his association or dismissing council.

3. In receiving Dr. Beecher, without the *requisite* credentials, and by letter, and dismissing him to ——— Presbytery, without his appearing before them at all. ——— He sent a written subscription to the questions in our book, with a request to be received ; also a recommendation from the association to which he belonged ; but not from the dismissing council, which is the only ecclesiastical body which could give him credentials. Yet they received him. He was thus ——— into a Presbyterian, that he might accept his *call*, and become Professor in the Lane Seminary. They knew he did not intend to reside within their bounds ; but to accommodate him, and prevent ———, they received and dismissed him *in transitu*. ——— They were very sensitive, and affected to consider our objections to their proceedings an attack upon Dr. Beecher, which was furthest from our intentions. It was not his fault that they acted unconstitutionally. But you perceive the tendency of such proceedings.

The committee appointed, ———, to examine their records, being of their own school, reported favorably ; but, in their statistical report, we learned the fact, in the case of Dr. B., and objected. ——— After considerable discussion, a *special* committee was appointed to examine their records, who brought their doings to light. ——— Two of their members were refused admission into ——— Presbytery, and were not permitted to preach in the vacant churches within their bounds. ——— These are trying times, and call for union and concert of prayer. I desire to feel that our hope is in God alone. We need his guidance and protection ; and having that, we have nothing to fear.

A member of the court here inquired whether this paper had any signature.

DR. WILSON replied that it had not, and that he should not have been at liberty to produce it, had not Dr. Beecher been permitted to do so first. Dr. Wilson then read the 2d specification. [See p. 91.]

With respect to this, I only need to remark, that what I read under the charge of slander shows conclusively that Dr. Beecher does consider the difference of doctrine to be material and essential; that it is not a mere logomachy, nor is there a mere shade of difference between the two systems. Far from it. For he tells us that one of these systems of doctrine practically eclipses the glory of the Sun of Righteousness, and has done more to hinder the salvation of souls than anything else in the Church; while the other is blessed of heaven, and spreads light and life wherever it goes. Yet, while he thus impugns the standards of our Church, and places the two doctrines in so strong contrast, he does — what? I do not say that he adopts our standards, because I have no proof that he ever has adopted them. But I do say, that if he does adopt them, he is guilty of hypocrisy; and no man can exonerate him from the charge. For he must be a hypocrite who professes cordially to adopt that which he disbelieves, impugns, and does his best to bring into disrepute.

DR. WILSON then read the 3d specification. [See p. 91.]

Under this specification I call for the reading of the testimony which has been taken before this court, touching the declarations made by Dr. Beecher respecting the Confession of Faith, when he stood before the Synod.

The testimony was read accordingly. [See it on pp. 93, 94, &c.]

The specification under which this testimony is introduced comes under the charge of dissimulation; and it seems, from the evidence, that Dr. Beecher has seen a time when he

could not adopt our standards fully. I do not know when this time was, for I never have been able to draw that out of him. Dr. Beecher himself stated, on a former occasion, that he commenced his ministry on Long Island by adopting the Confession of Faith as a Presbyterian minister; that he then removed into New England, and took the charge of a Congregational Church, but without any change in his religious sentiments. The Confession of Faith was still his creed, and although he acted under the provisions of the Plan of Union, he still approved the form of government adopted and practised in the Presbyterian Church. He afterward left the Congregational Churches, and entered the body to which we belong. At this time, it seems, he still professed to adhere to our standards, but it was under certain explanations of the terms there used. In the sermon which has been read before you, he admits that the language of the Reformers spoke of man's inability, but that this language was not understood, and that, therefore, he has a right of interpretation, inasmuch as the Church has interpreted her own creed. Admitting that he did adopt the standards fully, with this right of explanation, still, when his right to explain was called in question, when the language of his sermons was made a subject of controversy, when he came before Synod in consequence, and found himself in peculiar circumstances, surrounded by a large popular assembly, and placed before an ecclesiastical body the complexion of which was well known, and a majority of whose members adhered to the standards in their literal sense and obvious meaning, Dr. Beecher made those statements respecting his belief in our Confession of Faith which have been given in testimony before you. He made them, the witnesses say, with an emphasis peculiarly impressive. One witness spoke of the waving of his hand,

while another tells you that he clasped the book to his bosom with a gesticulation that was very unusual to him, and then declared, in the form of an oath, that he believed those standards to contain the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth. This took place in the autumn of 1833; and now, in the spring of 1835, what does Dr. Beecher publish? Why, he says, with respect to the creeds of the Reformers, and not excepting his own creed, that on some topics they were more full than the proportion of faith would require at this day; while, as a means of popular instruction and the exposition of truth, their language falls far short of what is called for by the times in which we live.

Now, I ask, Where is the man in this house, who, upon his solemn oath, can state that he believes this Confession of Faith to contain the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth? For myself, I can say, unhesitatingly, that it does contain the truth; and further, that, according to my knowledge, it is the most perfect system of doctrine which has ever been compiled by human effort. Yet I could not say that it contains nothing but the truth, although there is nothing in it which I object to. Still less can I say that it contains the whole truth, for I know that it does not. It is obvious, therefore, that the declaration made by Dr. Beecher, before the Synod, was made in a reckless manner. And, taking all the circumstances of the case into view,—remembering where he stood, and that his standing and orthodoxy as a Christian minister were at stake,—it appears to me equally obvious that the declaration was made for popular effect. And what he has since published shows that he believes our standards to be far short of what is called for by the exigency of our times; and, of course, that it does not contain the whole truth.

[Dr. BEECHER here inquired whether the language last referred to had been by him applied to the Confession of Faith.

Dr. WILSON replied that he so understood it.]

Dr. WILSON proceeded to read again extracts from Dr. Beecher's book, entitled, "The Causes and Remedy of Scepticism." [Already quoted. See vol. i. p. 65.]

Here, said Dr. Wilson, he is attempting to show that the very creeds of the Reformation are calculated to produce scepticism. He says that they are mere skeletons. What then, becomes of his declaration, that they contain the whole truth? And here I was going to stop; but I am led to remark, in general, that Dr. Beecher is in the habit of making reckless declarations. To show this, I will take his lecture on the cause of scepticism. When speaking of the French Revolution and its effect —

[Here Mr. BRAINERD interposed, and observed that this was not relevant to the case. Dr. Beecher was not on trial for making reckless declarations.]

Dr. WILSON said that he did not care about the introduction of the passage. It would only go to show that the sweeping declarations of Dr. Beecher were intended for popular effect. They must be made either without intention,—and that would argue what Dr. Wilson never should charge upon Dr. Beecher, namely, a want of sense,—or, they must be made, as he had averred, for the purpose of producing popular effect; and that was all he had charged under this head.

Dr. Wilson then read the 4th specification. [See p. 91.]

On this I shall merely say, that when you look at Dr. Beecher's sermons, and then consider the facts in connection with the 3d specification, how can you conclude otherwise than that his course exhibits dissimulation?

I shall now close the argument, by referring the court to the

decision of the Synod of Ohio, which was made in reference to these very difficulties; not as they have been occasioned by Dr. Beecher's preaching and publications, but elsewhere, as produced by others holding the same sentiments. The Synod made a record on their minutes, and gave it as an injunction upon all the Presbyteries under their care, that persons using doubtful language, or phrases which were new, and which caused disturbance in the Church, should be subjects of discipline.

In the next place, I shall present to the court Dr. Beecher's creed, as contained in his select system. It consists of eleven articles, and may be found in Dr. Beecher's reply to the *Christian Examiner*. The *Christian Examiner*, let it be remembered, is a Unitarian paper, and the Unitarians claim all the articles of the creed except two. And such was the clearness of the article in which this claim was advanced, so strong and so conclusive were the arguments it contained, that Dr. Beecher was obliged to come out in a long and labored reply. The articles of the creed are these :

—men are free agents ; in the possession of such faculties, and placed in such circumstances, as to render it practicable for them to do whatever God requires ; reasonable that he should require it ; and fit that he should inflict, literally, the entire penalty of disobedience. Such ability is here intended as lays a perfect foundation for government, and for rewards and punishments according to deeds.

And now I ask, Is there here to be found one single distinctive feature which belongs exclusively to that system of doctrine which is taught in our standards ? There are, to be sure, sentiments which are held in common ; and the last, especially, is received by Arminians, Catholics, Universalists, and almost all other sects, the Unitarians excepted. But here is not one single distinctive feature of the Calvinistic

system. The creed may very appropriately be called a select system, which some of all sects receive, and which some of all sects reject. I will now read Dr. Beecher's note appended to his sermon on this select system.

[MR. BRAINERD here inquired whether Dr. Beecher had set forth these eleven articles as the fundamental principles of Christianity, or as expressing the whole of his own creed.]

DR. WILSON replied, that he did not care whether they contained his entire creed or not. These were the articles as he had given them in his sermon. Dr. Wilson then read the note, as follows :

I choose to call these doctrines the evangelical system, not only because I believe them to be the Gospel, but because no man, or denomination, has held them so exclusively as to render it proper to designate them by the name of an individual or a sect. It is a select system, which some of almost every denomination hold, and some reject ; and which ought to be characterized by some general term indicative of the system, as held in all ages and among all denominations of Christians.

To sum up the whole matter : It will be proper for you, as a court, to mark Dr. Beecher's course, as far as it has been exhibited to you by evidence, from its commencement to the present time. It must be evident to all that his course has been marked with vacillation, and has been calculated to excite deep suspicion and long and loud complaint, both in and out of New England ; that it has been such as hitherto to elude detection, and escape anything like a trial on its real merits ; that one feature which has peculiarly marked it has been the mixture in his publications of truth and error,—just enough truth to make the error with which it is associated most deleterious and deadly to the souls of men. This has been the course adopted by all false teachers in every age of the Church, as well before as since the coming of Christ. Nor

is it strange; for no error could succeed, if it should be presented naked and alone, unless in a system of the most open and abandoned infidelity, or in such lectures as are delivered in Tammany Hall, New York. What has our Lord told us respecting such teachers? He said that they would come in sheep's clothing. And what is sheep's clothing, but an exhibition in part of such truths as none can gainsay or disprove, accompanied by an example of personal conduct with which none can find fault? We have had two individuals in the West,—I refer to Barton W. Stone, and to Mr. Parker, of New Richmond,—who, while they were the most decided errorists of modern times, maintained for thirty years morals of the most exemplary and unimpeachable description. They came in sheep's clothing. And what is Paul's description? He says that with good words and fair speeches they should beguile the hearts of the simple. And, what is very extraordinary, men of this description have ever appeared to be entirely unconscious of their own inconsistent and reckless course. Of this there is not a more impressive example than that of the brilliant and conspicuous Irving. When he had pushed his delusion even to the extreme of professing to speak with new tongues, and after he had been tried and condemned for his false and heretical opinions, he laid a paper on the table of the Presbytery, declaring in the fullest terms his belief in the whole Confession of Faith. Errorists ever appear unconscious of their own character. And how can it be otherwise, when God himself has told us that it would be so? The sentiments of which I complain are not insulated and independent tenets. They form part of a system; and it is a system so connected, that if you adopt one of its-leading principles, and possess a logical mind, you will be obliged to follow that principle out, until you

have adopted the whole. For example: suppose you adopt the doctrine of the natural ability of fallen man to do what is good,—his perfect capacity to comply fully with the law and the Gospel of God,—and make faith and repentance the terms on which God will forgive sin, and save the soul. You then necessarily exclude the direct agency of the Holy Spirit upon the heart in quickening those who are dead in sin. You then represent the Spirit, in the work of conversion, merely as being more capable of presenting truth to the mind than a man is. And this is the very illustration given in Ross' treatise, entitled, "Faith according to Common Sense." And as soon as you lay aside the agency of the Spirit in creating a new heart, you get at once upon the system of moral suasion. Then comes an indefinite atonement, through which God can forgive sin on condition of faith and repentance; which repentance and faith the sinner by his own strength is able to exercise, and which he is persuaded to exercise because the Spirit of God is able to present truth in a more luminous manner than a human preacher can do it. Or, to use Ross' illustration, a boy cannot split the log, not owing to any insufficiency in the wedge or the maul, but because he has not strength enough for the task; but when a man comes along, and takes hold of them, the log is immediately riven asunder. This illustration, however, was a bad one on their part, because it implies passivity in regeneration, a point which they deny. Well, as soon as you adopt the indefinite atonement, you cut up by the roots the federative representation of the second Adam; and, when you have done this, consistency will oblige you to go back, and deny the federative representation of the first Adam; and thus you have got to the denial of original sin; and you must say, with Dr. Beecher, that "somehow, in consequence of Adam's fall, all

men sin voluntarily ; and that the first sin in every man could have been and ought to have been avoided." Again, take the other side of the proposition, and you run into the system of the Perfectionists. Man is able to keep the whole law. The Spirit so persuades him as to make him willing. And when he is both able and willing, there can, of course, be no sin.

Now, we say that this is "another Gospel ;" that it is not the system of truth revealed in the Scriptures ; and I am here prepared to say, as the apostle did, without the least bitterness of spirit, and with an earnest desire that God would be pleased to turn men from their darkness and delusion, that if any man preach another Gospel, let him be anathema. The apostolic injunction must be obeyed,—to mark those who cause contentions among Christians, and to avoid them ; because, by good words and fair speeches, they beguile the hearts of the simple.

Sir, this is zealously pushed forward. It has already created divisions and distractions throughout the Presbyterian Church. What was once the condition of all the Churches under the care of this Synod ? They lived in peace. They acted as brethren. Meetings of the Synod and of the Presbyteries were anticipated as seasons of refreshing. We were all engaged,—not, indeed, to the extent we should have been, in laboring in the Lord's cause. We did, indeed, fall far short of our whole duty, but still we labored together with mutual affection, and our meetings were blessed. And I here say openly, and without fear of contradiction, that we enjoyed happy seasons of religious revival, until they were checked and interrupted by the introduction of this new system. But since this new divinity has entered our bounds, we have had nothing but distraction and disunion. Our revivals have been killed, and our once rejoicing Churches now sit in a

death-like silence. Yes, sir, they are like the mountains of Gilboa, destitute of the dews of heaven; they are like the bones in the valley of vision, dry, very dry. My brethren, you are called upon, as guardians of the purity of the Church, and watchmen upon her walls, to restore that peace and order which she once enjoyed, by putting a check to a system of doctrine which ought, like the idols of the heathen, to be cast with all speed to the moles and to the bats.

And let me tell you now that with this system there can be no compromise. Things which are so utterly contradictory never can be made to coalesce. The old and the new divinity are now engaged in an arduous and desperate struggle. It is like the contest of fire and water. And they must continue to fight until the weaker shall die. And, though this is poetry, it is no fiction. Much will depend on you. The days of white-washing are gone by forever. That party which shall be victorious will maintain the seminary, and control its funds; and that party which is not sustained must go out; for we cannot live together. The Confession of Faith must go down, or the new theology must be put out of doors. Your decision, it is true, will not be final. But, if it shall be made in conformity with the standards of our Church, what you bind on earth will be bound in heaven; and, even though it should be annulled by men, will, nevertheless, in the end be recognized by the broad seal of the great Master.

The simple question which each of you is bound to put to his own conscience, under each separate charge, in this trial, is simply this: Has this charge been sustained by evidence? and, unless I am greatly deceived indeed, your reply must be in the affirmative. And, if it is, will you acquit this man? Will you tell him to do so no more? and will you there let it end? Be reminded, I pray you, of the cases of Barnes

and Duffield. There a white-washing committee was appointed, who white-washed both parties. In the latter case, the charges were sustained, and the man proved guilty; he was gently advised to offend no more. And, what followed? — Peace? Order?—No; deeper and deeper animosities, and wider and wider divisions, were the natural consequences; and must continue to be the consequences, until the decisions of church-courts are made so clear with respect to the infliction of censure that they will effectually guard against the inroads of heresy, that they shall strike terror into the breast of every heresiarch, and shall rescue every inexperienced novice from his *facilis descensus Averni*,—the easy road to perdition.

I have taxed my ingenuity to discover what defence could possibly be set up by the accused; and I confess myself utterly unable so much as to conjecture. This may be owing to my want of imagination, and of ingenuity; and Dr. Beecher will very probably show something that was far beyond my powers of imagination to anticipate; and when his powerful intellect shall have demonstrated that white is black, that two and two do not make four, then, and not till then, may he expect an acquittal.

FRIDAY AFTERNOON.

Dr. BEECHER said that before commencing his defence he wished to adduce some additional testimony in reference to the question how much of his capital in character he had lost before he left New England; and he adduced it in order to meet the anonymous and personal letters which had been read by Dr. Wilson, as published by Mr. Rand, the Edwardean, and others.

Dr. WILSON said he had no objection, so far as it was testimony; but, at present, Dr. Beecher himself stood on one side, and Mr. Rand on the other, as to the question of Dr. Beecher's capital in reputation. He presumed the Presbytery was competent to decide between them.

PROFESSOR STOWE was thereupon sworn, and testified as follows :

According to the best of my knowledge, Dr. Beecher's reputation and influence in New England were never so great, nor did he ever enjoy so extensively the confidence of the religious community, as at the time when he received and accepted the invitation to come to Cincinnati.

To the best of my knowledge, he had then but *three* open and declared assailants of public character :

1. Thomas Whittemore, editor of the *Universalist Trumpet* ; a paper uniformly marked with the worst features of the most ferocious kind of Universalism.

2. Moses Thatcher, editor of the *New England Telegraph* ; a paper devoted to the most ultra kind of Hopkinsianism, which makes God the direct efficient cause of every sinful thought, emotion, word and deed of every sinful creature in the universe ; and to the most ultra kind of independency in church government, which he carried to such an extreme that the Hopkinsians themselves, with Dr. Emmons at their head, made a public disclaimer and condemnation of his views and proceedings in matters of church discipline. Mr. Thatcher had had difficulties in his own church, which were divided against him in a council of which Dr. Beecher was a prominent member.

3. Asa Rand, editor of the *Volunteer*, and afterwards the *Lowell Observer*. I was for many years acquainted with

Mr. Rand, having fitted for college in the parish of which he was minister, and boarding next door to him; and afterwards occupying, for about a year, the same office-room with him in Boston, as an editor. He is a man of great industry, perseverance, and other valuable traits of character; but, from his peculiar habits of thought, and feeling, and action, not likely to do justice to such a man as Dr. Beecher. He was opposed to Dr. Beecher's theology, being himself an advocate of the taste and exercise scheme of Dr. Burton. He disliked Dr. Beecher's mode of preaching, being strenuously hostile to religious excitement and strong appeals to the feelings, of which he had given decided proof many years before, by his disapprobation of Dr. Payson's mode of preaching, in whose neighborhood he was settled, and whose sister he had married. Besides, Dr. Beecher was uniformly successful in Boston, and constantly rising in influence, while Mr. Rand was uniformly unsuccessful, and his influence was continually decreasing. Those acquainted with the circumstances will receive Mr. Rand's statement and innuendoes with great abatement; not from any distrust of his moral integrity, but from a knowledge of the medium through which facts would present themselves to his mind. To the best of my knowledge, the suspicions and complaints alluded to in Mr. Rand's letter to Dr. Beecher were confined to a very small number of persons, and did not by any means extend to the great body of what is called the old-school party in New England, or the most judicious and leading men in that party. Of the men of this class, no one stands higher than Dr. Woods, of Andover. I lived in his house part of the time while I was at the seminary; from that time to this he has always treated me with the kindness, affection, and confidence of a father, and I have always loved, and trusted, and consulted him as

such. While deliberating whether I should come to Lane Seminary, Dr. Woods frequently, and with the deep feeling characteristic of him, expressed to me his affectionate confidence in Dr. Beecher, and his earnest wish for the success of the seminary. The same feelings were expressed to me by Dr. Woods, and the same kind wishes reiterated, when I visited him at his house in September last.

Dr. Tyler is well known to the public as the chief antagonist of the New Haven theology. He stands to me in the relation of a father and confidential friend. I have been for years a member of his family, and his children are my brothers and sisters. When I was deliberating about coming to Lane Seminary, Dr. Tyler expressed the same feelings with Dr. Woods, and, perhaps, with still greater distinctness. He has frequently said to me, in conversation, "I always loved Dr. Beecher, and have entire confidence in him," or words to that effect. It is my full conviction that the feelings of Dr. Woods and Dr. Tyler towards Dr. Beecher are the feelings of the great body of the religious community in New England, even among the strong opponents of what is called new divinity men and measures. The Congregational ministers of Maine and New Hampshire, particularly, are almost entirely of this class, and I never saw one that did not love and confide in Dr. Beecher; and I am personally acquainted, I think, with a majority of the ministers in both those states. The pamphlet by an Edwardean, I am sure, does not express the feeling of even the old-school party in New England. I never heard Dr. Woods or Dr. Tyler say a word in favor of it. This pamphlet was strongly disapproved by men of all parties; and the author, as far as I know, has, to this day, never dared to avow himself: and, from my connection with opposers of New Haven theology, I think I should have

known it, if he had. It was everywhere regarded in New England as a great and heroic sacrifice, on the part of Dr. Beecher, to give up the advantages of the reputation and public influence he had then acquired, and to go to a distant field, where he must gain reputation anew, and work his way like a young man.

Rev. F. Y. VAIL was then sworn, and his testimony is as follows :

I have, during the last four years, visited the churches and ministers extensively in New York and the States of New England, in obtaining funds for the Lane Seminary. I have great confidence in stating that the association of Dr. Beecher's name with this institution was one of the most important means of securing the funds requisite for its endowment ; and that both ministers and churches, wherever I have visited, have, with scarcely an exception, manifested the most unshaken confidence in Dr. Beecher. The general impression seemed to pervade the Congregational and Presbyterian churches with which I have had intercourse, that the removal of no other man would be so great a blessing to this important section of our country as that of Dr. Beecher ; and it was with much regret that they were called to give up his important and valuable services in New England.

Rev. ARTEMAS BULLARD was next sworn, and testified as follows :

For nearly five years I was agent of the Massachusetts Sabbath School Union, before Dr. Beecher was called to the West, and for several years a member of Dr. Beecher's church in Boston. I have visited nearly every Orthodox Congregational minister in Massachusetts, and a great por-

tion of all in the New England States. Among all these I know the reputation of Dr. Beecher had been uniformly rising till he left. There was no minister in New England so uniformly dreaded and hated by Unitarians and Universalists as Dr. Beecher. I was in the church-meeting when the question was discussed whether Dr. Beecher should be dismissed to come here. The main reason urged why he should not come, by members of the Church, was, that he never had so much influence in the orthodox community as then.

Dr. WILSON. — What is the standard of orthodoxy among the clergymen you denominate orthodox?

Answer. — Those are denominated orthodox, in New England, who are opposed to Unitarian sentiments.

Dr. WILSON. — Have they any written or published creed, which forms a bond of union among them, as our system of doctrine?

Ans. — Nothing like the Confession of Faith of the Presbyterian Church.

Dr. WILSON. — Is not every congregation, in respect to its articles of faith, independent, claiming the right of forming its own creed and covenant?

Ans. — I believe they are.

Dr. WILSON. — Was the creed and covenant of Dr. Beecher's church similar to that which has been extracted from the sermon on "Faith once Delivered to the Saints"?

Ans. — I never compared the two.

Dr. WILSON. — In what estimation did the orthodox ministers of New England hold that sermon?

Ans. — I don't recollect ever hearing that mentioned as distinct from other sermons.

Dr. WILSON. — Has Mr. Rand, in his letter to Dr.

Beecher, misrepresented or misstated Dr. Beecher's connections with Dr. Taylor and Mr. Finney?

Ans. — I don't know what was in that letter.

Dr. WILSON. — Why did the Unitarians hate Dr. Beecher, when the *Christian Examiner*, in a review of his sermon on "Faith once Delivered," &c., claimed the sentiments as their own?

Ans. — They hated and dreaded him because they supposed that he was the most powerful and efficient opponent of Unitarian sentiments. His labors in Boston were specially directed to counteract Unitarian sentiments.

Dr. WILSON. — Do you not know it as a historical fact that Unitarians greatly rejoice at the progress of what is called new theology?

Ans. — They do not, if you mean that Dr. Beecher's doctrines are new theology.

Mr. BRAINERD. — Are the orthodox ministers and churches of New England Calvinists?

Ans. — Yes, so far as they follow any man.

Dr. BEECHER. — In what estimation do ministers and churches hold the Assembly's Shorter Catechism?

Ans. — The orthodox churches, universally, consider it the best epitome of the doctrines of the Bible. The families are taught that Catechism as universally as they are in the Presbyterian Church.

Dr. WILSON. — Do they teach the Shorter Catechism as it is mutilated and altered by the American Sabbath School Union, or as it exists in the standards of our Church?

Ans. — I never knew any of the American Sabbath School Union Catechism in New England.

Mr. BULLARD confirmed the testimony of Prof. Stowe,

respecting Mr. Rand, and the editors of the *Telegraph*, *Trumpet*, and others.

Prof. STOWE called up again.

Dr. WILSON. — Has Mr. Rand, in his letter to Dr. Beecher, part of which has been read before this Presbytery, misrepresented or misstated Dr. Beecher's coöperation with Dr. Taylor and Mr. Finney in Boston?

Ans. — I cannot give a simple affirmation or negation to the question; but must say that the statements of the letter are unfair, inasmuch as they represent Dr. Beecher as entirely concurring in, and responsible for, all the sentiments and measures of Dr. Taylor and Mr. Finney; and the disclaimer which he asserts of such intention does not at all correct the general impression which the letter always makes. [Read and approved.]

Dr. BEECHER now rose, and addressed the court in nearly the following terms :

I have fallen very unexpectedly, at my time of life, on the necessity of getting testimony to support my theological and clerical character. But, since I am called to it, I may as well make thorough work; and I shall, therefore, request the clerk to read a letter addressed to me by the Rev. Dr. Greene, two years previous to my coming to this place. The letter is dated 31st March, 1828, and is as follows :

Philadelphia, March 31, 1828.

REV. AND DEAR SIR: This, Sir, will be handed you by two members of the Fifth Presbyterian Church of this city, who have been delegated to consult you on the subject of a call to the pastoral charge of that Church. They need no assistance from me in explaining their views, or in showing the importance of the situation to which they and the people they represent have invited you. My design, in writing this note, is to say, that, having presided at the meeting of the congregation at which this call was

voted, I can and do assure you that the most perfect unanimity and apparent cordiality marked the whole proceeding. Public notice of the meeting had been fully given on the preceding Lord's day ; the assembly was large and solemn : and there was neither a dissenting voice, nor, so far as I judge, a neutral individual, when the vote was taken.

I have only to add, that if you shall find it to be your duty to become an inhabitant of this city, and a member of the Presbytery of Philadelphia, you shall, if I am spared to witness it, be received and treated in the most respectful manner, and with true fraternal affection.

Your friend and brother in the Gospel of our precious Redeemer,

ASHBEL GREENE.

Rev. Dr. BEECHER.

Let it be remembered that this letter was written by Dr. Greene after he had commended, as Calvinistic, the sermon in which I advanced the doctrine of man's natural ability ; for which, in the opinion of my brother Wilson, I ought to be turned out of the Church, and, of course, Dr. Greene also.

I will now request the clerk to read another letter addressed to me, about the same time, from the Rev. Dr. Miller. This is dated April 2, 1828, and is in the following words :

Princeton, April 2, 1828.

REV. AND DEAR BROTHER : Before this letter reaches your hands, you will have been apprized that the church of which our friend Dr. Skinner was lately the pastor, has given you an *unanimous call* to become their minister.

Some are disposed to smile at this measure, as a sort of desperate effort at *retaliation*, for robbing Philadelphia of Dr. Skinner. Others view it as a plan by no means hopeless. But ALL, so far as I know, in this region, would *most cordially rejoice* in the success of the application, and hail your arrival in Philadelphia as an event most devoutly to be wished by all the friends of Zion within the bounds of the Presbyterian Church.

My dear brother, I beg, with all the earnestness that I am capable of feeling or uttering, that you will not either lightly consider or hastily reject this call. I do seriously believe that, however painful the step (of removal to Philadelphia) might be, both to the friends of religion in Massachusetts and to yourself, the residue of your days could not possibly be disposed of (so far as human views can go) in a manner so much calcu-

lated to *unite* the friends of Christ in the South and West with those at the East, and to introduce a new era of *harmony, love* and *cöoperation*, in the American churches.

It is not only a matter of immense importance that the individual church in Philadelphia which gives you this call should be supplied with a pastor wise, pious, peaceful, prudent and acceptable, as far as possible, to all parties ; but, if *you* will come in to that place, I am most deeply persuaded that you will have an opportunity of a most happy and reviving influence all around you, to a degree which very few men in our country have ever had ; that you will be likely, humanly speaking, to bring together feelings and efforts which are now widely separated ; and, in fact, of giving a new impulse to all those great plans which I know to be near your heart.

By removing to Philadelphia, — unless I utterly miscalculate, — you would not be likely to subduct very essentially from your usefulness in Massachusetts. You might still, by means of writing and occasional visits, continue to do *there* a large portion of what you now do ; while your influence and usefulness in the Presbyterian Church, from New England to New Orleans, might, and probably would, be increased *ten-fold*. I have no doubt that, by your acceptance of the station to which you are called, your opportunity for doing good in the American churches would be *doubled*, if not *quadrupled*, at a stroke.

Say not that these things are matters of human calculation. They are so ; and yet, I think, the book of God, and human experience, furnish an abundant foundation for them to rest upon. The truth is, we want nothing, for the benefit of our eighteen hundred churches (next to the sanctifying Spirit of God), so much as an individual in Philadelphia (our ecclesiastical metropolis) who should be active, energetic, untiring, comprehensive in his plans, and firm and unmoved in his purposes and efforts. Will you not cast yourself on the Lord's strength and faithfulness, and come and help us to unite all our force in one mighty effort, in the name of our heavenly King, to promote his cause *at home and abroad* ? With the cordiality of a brother, and the freedom of an old friend, I conjure you, when such an open door is set before you, not to refuse to enter it. As to your reception among us, I hope I need not say that it would be *universally* with *glad hearts* and *open arms* ! May the Lord direct and bless you ! Sincerely your friend and brother,

SAMUEL MILLER.

I have reason to believe that Dr. Miller, at the time he wrote this letter, had read all my publications but the last ;

and if so, he and Dr. Greene ought to go out of the Church together.

I have another letter, of a somewhat later date; and, now that I am holding up myself by certificates of character, I wish that this, too, may be read. It is from the Rev. Dr. J. L. Wilson.

Dr. WILSON here inquired whether this was the same letter which Dr. Beecher had produced at the last meeting of Presbytery.

Dr. BEECHER replied in the affirmative.

Dr. WILSON then inquired of the Moderator whether Dr. Beecher had not said at the time that the explanation which he (Dr. Wilson) had made in respect to it was satisfactory.

Dr. BEECHER said that the explanation was satisfactory so far as respected the sermon on native depravity, and no further.

Dr. WILSON said he had no objection to the letter being read, because he could make the same explanation again.

Dr. BEECHER replied that he would not make the same explanation, because he (Dr. Beecher) should make that sermon an exception. The letter now to be read had been addressed by a committee of the Board of Trustees of Lane Seminary to the church to which Dr. Beecher belonged, at the time he was invited to come here. It is dated on the 5th February, 1831, and is in the following terms :

Cincinnati, Feb. 5, 1831.

To the Hanover Church and Congregation :

BELoved BRETHREN AND FELLOW-CITIZENS : As a committee of the board of Lane Theological Seminary, the undersigned are called upon to address you in behalf of that institution. [The letter proceeds to state reasons, drawn from a general view of the wants of the West, for the erection of the seminary, &c. It then proceeds :]

Having presented this general view of the character, claims and prospects, of our seminary, permit us, dear brethren and friends, to specify a few particular reasons why Dr. Beecher is called, by Divine Providence, and the great interests of the Church, to this institution.

1. The strongest convictions of many of our wisest and best men, east and west of the mountains, that the great interests of the Church, and especially of the West, require Dr. Beecher's labors at the head of our seminary. A large number of our ministerial and lay brethren have expressed their deliberate conviction that the enterprise of building up a great *central theological institution* at Cincinnati, — soon to become the great Andover or Princeton of the West, and to give character to hundreds and thousands of ministers which may issue from it, — is one of the most important and responsible in which the Church is ever called to engage ; and that no man in our country, in many important respects, is so well fitted to give character, energy and success, to such an institution, as Dr. Beecher. Never has the presentation of a similar subject excited more deep and lively interest, and called forth a more general and cordial approbation among the friends of religion at the East and the West, than by the announcement of Dr. Beecher's appointment as our president and theological professor, and the consequent prospect of our securing ample funds for the endowment of the institution. This voice of public opinion, and of the ministers of the Church of Christ, we think is to be regarded as no unimportant indication of the will of Providence in this matter.

2. Dr. Beecher's well-known standing and well-known reputation at the West, as well as the East, will make his labors of incalculable importance to our seminary. * * * Nor is it a consideration of small importance, that Dr. Beecher's habits of rigorous exercise and labor would exert a most powerful practical influence in giving increased reputation and popularity among the community generally.

3. * * * The Church is now, doubtless, entering into the most eventful period of her most glorious enterprise, in speedily sending the Gospel to every creature, and subjugating the world to the Prince of Peace. To accomplish this great work, we want, indeed, hundreds and thousands of additional laborers ; but we need, more especially, in the character of those who come forth, to see men of higher and holier enterprise than most of us who have entered the ministry. Do we not need, and must we not have, if the millennium is ever to come, men of evangelical and deep-toned piety ; baptized into the spirit of revivals, — possessing clear and discriminating views of divine truth, — despising the compromising spirit of worldly pru-

dence, — fearless and firm in their attacks upon the strong-holds of infidelity and the devil ; men who should be fully up to, or rather far in advance of, the spirit of the age, in Christian enterprise and action, and men whose whole souls are absorbed in the great work of converting the world ? And how, dear brethren and friends, can we so effectually rear up such men, as by putting them under the instruction of one whose spirit shall become theirs, and who, without invidious comparisons, has no superior, in the characteristics now mentioned, in this or any other portion of Christendom ?

When we reflect how much has been accomplished, and is now doing, for the salvation of our country and the world, by one such spirit as Beecher, we feel that the Church will be deprived of his most important services and influence, unless he is permitted to impress the important lineaments of his character upon the rising ministers of the West.

4. The influence which Dr. Beecher would be able to exert in our city and the surrounding country, as a preacher, renders his labors at this point peculiarly important and desirable. It is well known that Cincinnati now contains about thirty thousand inhabitants, &c. * * * While training up young men for the ministry where their influence on the city will be powerfully felt, the contiguity of our seminary to the city will enable the doctor to preach the Gospel to the population as extensively and powerfully, and, we doubt not, as successfully, as at any former period of his ministry. Who, then, would not rejoice to see Dr. Beecher double his influence and usefulness, by giving character and prominence to a great theological seminary, while powerfully wielding at the same time the sword of truth against the augmenting powers of darkness in our city and surrounding country ?

5. The deep and general interest which would be awakened at the East, in behalf of the West, by the removal of Dr. Beecher to our seminary, constitutes, in our estimation, an urgent reason for his acceptance of our call. We all thank God and take courage, in view of the interest which has been excited, and the effort made at the East in behalf of the West within the last few years. * * &c. What, then, do we ask, can be done now for the West, &c. ? We answer, let hundreds and thousands of pious and intelligent families from the East, with the spirit of missionaries, scatter themselves over all the towns and villages of our great valley, without delay. * * * Do you ask how the interest, necessary to bring them on the ground, can be excited ? We reply, let it be known that Dr. Beecher is really going into this field of labor himself ; that, in entering upon the

work, he is willing to lead the way ; and, as he passes over the Alleghanies, let him pass through the old states, and beat up for volunteers in this truly Christian crusade against the infidels. And, when the East feels sufficient interest in the salvation of the West to send to her aid, not merely a few of the young and inexperienced subalterns, but some of her most distinguished generals, it will be felt that the warfare in which we are engaged is one which must soon give liberty and happiness, or despotism and ruin, to our country ; nor will men nor resources be wanting to achieve a speedy and triumphant victory.

The last reason we shall mention for Dr. Beecher's connection with our institution is, that the security of the funds pledged on this condition, and the consequent existence and prosperity of the seminary, depend upon it.

* * * The professorships, amounting, in all, to fifty thousand dollars, are nearly secured, on condition that Dr. Beecher becomes our professor, and that we at the West raise from ten thousand to twenty thousand dollars more for buildings, &c. These funds, thus liberally offered to us, are to be given on account of the special confidence which the donors place in Dr. Beecher, to preside over and give character and success to our seminary, &c. By a Committee of the Board :

J. L. WILSON,	{	Signed by me, at
J. GALLAHER,		their request,
F. Y. VAIL,		F. Y. VAIL.

It is proper I should state that Dr Wilson declared that he had not seen my sermon on the Native Character of Man at the time this letter was written ; but he certainly had a full knowledge of my sentiments on the subject of natural ability so long before as the year 1817, when he had a conversation with me on that subject.

Dr. BEECHER, having no further testimony to adduce, now entered upon his defence, and spoke substantially as follows :

I have two causes of embarrassment in entering upon this subject. I know that I am liable to be regarded as a stranger, thrust in upon the quiet and comfort of a venerable patriarch, who had borne the heat and burden of the day ; and vexing

his righteous soul by obtruding upon him my own novel crudities and heresies. And, in the second place, I am also aware that it may be said that ever since I came here there has been nothing but quarrelling in the "churches of the West; and that so it will be all the time I stay here." To this my answer is, that as to my being an intruder, this good brother himself called me to come here, and in so doing acted, as he thought, in obedience to God's high command; and, in obedience to what I understood to be the manifested will of Heaven, I came. I am not an intruder. I left all that man can hold dear, in respectful estimation and the sympathies of friendship, and came to this place, expecting the warm bosom and surrounding arms of this, my venerable brother. All I shall say is, that my reception was not such as I had anticipated. I regret exceedingly that I am compelled by a sense of duty to refer to the manner in which I was received and treated by him. And here let me say, that if this matter had respected myself alone, as a private individual, no mortal would ever have heard a word upon the subject from my lips. But I am not my own. My character and influence belong to Christ; and, if I have not done evil, I have no right to permit them to be suspected. And, if my brother, with ever so good intentions, has done me wrong, if he has broken the arm of my influence as a man associated with an important public institution, and with the Christian cause generally, it is due to that cause, and to the responsible station I occupy, that I should endeavor to save myself, although the mode is most painful to me, as I fear it will prove to him. I would thank the clerk to read a few extracts from the paper called the *Standard*, a religious periodical published in this city. The articles are subscribed with the initials J. L. W.

[Some difficulty occurring in turning to the extracts, Dr.

Beecher waived his call for the reading of them, and proceeded with the body of his defence.]

If Dr. Wilson, after having invited me to settle in this city, became possessed of information which led him to believe that I ought not to accept the call which had been put into my hands, Christian courtesy and sincerity required of him that he should inform me of such change in his opinion, and frankly avow the intended change of his course in regard to me. If he had done so, I would have gone to him and wept upon his bosom, in view of such openness and integrity. But he never did it. When he opposed my admission into the Presbytery, I expressed my confidence that I could explain my views and doctrinal opinions satisfactorily to him; and we had an interlocutory meeting of Presbytery for that purpose. But it did not result as I had expected. After that, I told Dr. Wilson repeatedly that he misunderstood my views in respect to original sin. For I perfectly well knew that I held opinions on that subject which he thought I did not hold; and, on the contrary, that I did not hold certain other opinions which he thought I did hold. And I asked him whether it would not be better for us mutually to explain, and endeavor to come to a satisfactory understanding, than at our time of life to agitate the community with controversy, and run the risk of breaking up the peace of the Church. Dr. Wilson replied, that when men had reached our period of life their opinions were sufficiently known; and he has never permitted me to enjoy the opportunity of one word of explanation, from that time to this. Now, I freely admit that he had a perfect right to change his opinion in regard to me, and the expediency of my settlement here. But he had not a right, in utter recklessness of my personal feelings, and the impairing of my ministerial usefulness, to drag me before the public, at my time of life, after I

had served God and the Church so many years, and must soon go to give in my account. It was wrong, very wrong, in my brother, to tear me up after this sort.

The doctrines charged upon me are not recent. I am not accused of apostasy from opinions once received and professed, nor of innovation in the introduction of notions till now unheard of. The doctrines I maintain existed in the Presbyterian Church before I was born. I was ordained, on examination, and on a profession of that same faith for holding and publishing which I am now to be tried as a heretic. In the Presbytery which ordained me there were men of the old and of what was then called the new divinity (though it was thirty-five years ago), and the vote for my ordination was unanimous; and I was accordingly ordained by the Presbytery of Long Island. I do not say that I subscribed the Confession of Faith at that time, under the declaration that it contained the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth. I was not prepared at that time to say so. I had not then studied it enough, nor had I been enough charged with heresy, to give keenness to my investigation of its meaning. I signed it, as all other ministers in the Church sign it, as containing, "the systems of doctrine taught in the holy Scriptures;" and I subscribed it sincerely.

The doctrines on which I am accused are not matters of mere metaphysical speculation; but they are truths of which I find it necessary to make a constant use in the performance of my pastoral and ministerial duties; and which, of all others, I have found most efficacious in producing conviction of sin, and the conversion of souls to God. It has no doubt been necessary to guard against the perversion of these doctrines, as it is in regard to all other doctrines: for, as Horace says, "If the vessel be not clean, whatever you pour into it

will turn to vinegar." But ministers, surely, are not responsible for all that perversion of the truth they preach of which others are often guilty. I do not regard myself as standing here as an insulated individual suspected of heresy. I do not believe I am suspected of heresy, or ever have been, to any considerable extent. I do not feel as if I stood here alone, to be sifted and scrutinized, to see whether I am worthy of a standing in the Church, or ought to be excommunicated as a heretic. I am one of many who believe the same doctrines that I do. And if any man shall be enabled to make the truths of the Gospel tell with greater effect on the hearts and consciences of sinners than I have made them tell, I will bless God for it. No man shall be envied by me because his ministry has been more successful than my own. My heart, I trust, will ever be a stranger to any such feelings.

The charges against me are heresy, slander, and hypocrisy; but they all turn on the charge of heresy. For, if the doctrines I teach are according to the Word of God and the Confession of Faith, then I am neither a slanderer nor a hypocrite. It is said that I have professed to agree with the standards of our Church, and yet know that profession to be false; while I, on the contrary, say that I do concur with those standards as I understand them. If I have mistaken their meaning, still the charge is not sustained. Ah! Sir, there must be some eye which can look in here [laying his hand on his bosom], or there must be some clear evidence outside, before it may be said that I have told a lie. I said that I believed, on further inquiry, and I believe it now, that on the points involved in this controversy our Confession of Faith contains the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth. If I was guilty of hypocrisy in making that declaration before the Synod, I now repeat the offence. I may find out that on some points

I have mistaken his meaning; and, if I do, I will say so. But I am honest in my past and present declarations.

The topics of my alleged heresy respect,

1st. The foundation of moral obligation; or the natural ability of man as a free agent, and subject of moral government, to obey the Gospel.

2d. The moral inability of man, as a sinner entirely depraved, to do anything which includes evangelical obedience and secures pardon and eternal life; as consisting entirely in his will, or obstinate, voluntary aversion from God and the Gospel.

3d. The origin of this moral impotency; or the relation between Adam and his posterity, and the effecton them of his sin.

4th. The properties of all personal sin as voluntary.

5th. The efficient and instrumental cause, and the consequences of regeneration.

6th. The nature of Christian character as complex or perfect.

My first reply, then, to these several charges of doctrinal heresy, is that what I have believed, and have taught on these points through all my public ministry, is neither heresy nor error, but is in accordance with the Word of God and the Confession of Faith.

My second reply is, that if in any respect they differ from what shall be decided to be the true exposition of the Confession of Faith, they include nothing at variance with the fundamental articles of the system of doctrine it contains; and are such as have characterized the members of the Presbyterian Church from the beginning, and have been recognized in various forms as not inconsistent with subscription to the Confession, and an honest and honorable standing in the Church.

Before I proceed, it will be necessary to say a word about

creeds, and subscription to creeds, and the rights of private interpretation and free inquiry.

1. And, first, they are not a substitute for the Bible, but a concise epitome of what is believed to be the meaning of the Bible.

2. They originate from the discrepancies of human opinion, and the necessity of united views within certain limits, in order to complacency, confidence and practical coöperation. Generally they do not aim at a verbal and exact and universal agreement; but so far as affords evidence of Christian character, and lays a foundation for united action. The attempt of universal and exact conformity must split the Church up into small and consequently feeble and impotent departments, and of course weaken her associated power and moral influence.

Whatever differences of opinion do not destroy the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace, and are consistent with fellowship and coöperation, may be tolerated; and hence you find that in proportion as you insist upon specific accuracy you render your denomination small and insignificant, in comparison with the numbers and the wealth, and the amount of influence and moral power in society, which it ought to embrace; and thus prevent that momentum for good which the collected body ought to exert. The true policy, and that which has been pursued, is to push the requirement of conformity only so far as will enable the masses of men combined under the same profession of truth to be large and weighty, to have power and effect in giving a healthy tone to public sentiment, and carry forward the great designs which the Gospel was intended to accomplish in the world.

3. Churches of every name are voluntary associations, and, on the principles of civil and religious liberty, have a right to agree in respect to the doctrine and discipline by which

they will promote their own edification. The exclusion is no encroachment on the rights of others. Those who differ from me in sentiment have no right to be judges of my liberty, or to encroach on my comfort, edification or useful action; but may seek their own edification with others who agree with them in their own way. This is the origin of different denominations, and indispensable in order to practical and efficient action.

4. The exposition of our Confession of Faith appertains, of necessity, in the first instance, to those who subscribe it, and are bound by it. Each subscriber must, for himself, attach some definite import to the terms, and all have an equal right to their own interpretation in the first instance, and no individual has any authority to decide, efficaciously, in respect to his brother, what is the plain and obvious sense; but, in cases of difference, attended with inconvenience, it is to be referred to the higher judicatories, and their decision settles the construction,—just as every man judges for himself of the laws, and of his own rights of property, until discrepant claims demand a reference to the courts for an authoritative exposition of the law. The decision of the highest judicatory is the meaning of the Bible according to the intent of those who agree to walk together. I certainly have no right, in the exercise of my philosophy, or biblical exposition, or free inquiry, to set it aside. If I change my opinions so as to interfere with the bond of union, it is my right to leave the Church; but I have no right by my liberty to make inroads on the peace and edification of others.

In respect to the right of private interpretation, in the first instance, I presume I must have misunderstood my brother Wilson when he says the Confession is not to be explained. That is popery. The papists have no right of private judg-

ment. They must believe as the Pope and council believe, and may believe no otherwise. They are forbidden to exercise their own understanding, and must receive words and doctrines in the sense prescribed and prepared for them. I cannot suppose my brother so holds; but that when he subscribes the Confession, he subscribes to what, at the time, he understands to be its meaning. Who else is to judge for him? Is the Pope to be called in? Is he to ask a General Council what the Confession means? Does he not look at it with his own eyes, and interpret it with his own understanding? But, as I understand my brother, he insists that there is to be no explanation, but that every expression of doctrinal sentiment is to be placed side by side with the Confession, and measured by it: just as you would put two tables side by side, to see if they are of the same size. You are to try the sermon and the Confession by the ear, and see if they sound alike. If they do not, the sermon is heretical, and the author a heretic. Can this be his meaning?

It is admitted that the Church is a voluntary association. None are obliged to join it. But, under affinity of views and sentiments, a number of individuals come together to form themselves into one body. How are they to find out what opinions they do hold? It must be by giving an account of what each man understands to be religious truth revealed from God. If they have no standard, they proceed to form one; or, if one has been formed, they look over it together to see whether they agree with it, and if they do so agree, they make this standard the symbol of their faith, and thus become affiliated with other churches holding the same opinions. I admit that when they have thus examined, explained, and assented to a common standard, they are bound by it; and if any one alters his opinion afterwards to such an extent that the community

becomes dissatisfied,—to such an extent as to break the bond of union, and be unable any longer to walk with his brethren,—he must withdraw; or, if he refuses to withdraw, he must be put out. In joining the Presbyterian Church, each individual member—unless he comes in as an ignoramus, without knowing what he professes—does explain her standards for himself. He must do it, and he has a right to do it, unless his joining the Church means nothing and professes nothing. If it does mean anything, it must mean to him what he understands it to mean; and of this he must, in the first instance, be himself the judge. This is the sixth time I have endeavored to explain my meaning on this subject; and I have been constantly told that I am teaching Independency. I deny that it is Independency, and insist that it is Presbyterianism and common sense. I say that each minister and each member has as good a right to his own exposition of the common standard as another has; and so I told my brother Wilson. I have as good a right to call you a heretic, because your exposition of the Confession does not agree with my view of it, as you have to call me a heretic, because my understanding of the Confession does not agree with yours. You say that I am a heretic according to the plain and obvious meaning of our standards. But your “plain and obvious meaning” is not my “plain and obvious meaning;” and who is to be umpire between us? The constitution has provided one. My brother Wilson and I must go to the Presbytery. I have no right to traduce my brother, and call him a heretic, on the authority of my private personal interpretation of an instrument we both profess to embrace; nor has he any right, before I have been heard and judged by competent authority, to vilify my character, to attack my good name, to drag me into the public prints, and to use his long-established and

broadly-extended influence to bring up a fog of suspicion around me. For, what is the character of a minister of Jesus Christ? It is like the character of a female, liable to be tainted and ruined by the breath of slander. What is more natural to mankind than suspicion? How ready men are to entertain an uncharitable suggestion, or an evil report, come from what source it may! But, when suggestions not only, but direct assertions, proceed not from an obscure or suspected source, but come from years and experience, and high standing and wide-spread influence, what stranger can come and hope to stand before it? In the form of responsible accusation it might be met; but who can stand before the force of SLANDER?

Sir, I made no statements about a loss of reputation; I simply told the truth in respect to what this my brother has done, and the manner in which he treated me, after having first invited me into a strange place. I came here on his invitation, an entire stranger: and, instead of receiving me into the open arms of brotherly affection; instead of welcoming and sustaining and strengthening me, as a fellow-laborer in a common cause; instead of conciliating the public confidence; instead of soothing, and comforting, and seeking to encourage and warm my heart, in a great and arduous undertaking, in an untried field,—he did what in him lay to weaken my hands, to discourage my heart, and to multiply a thousand-fold those difficulties which were inseparable from my situation, and thus to thwart every good and holy end for which I believed that God had called me into this Western world. He had a perfect right, as I have freely admitted, on proper evidence, to change the good opinion he had at first entertained of me; but, then, he should have come to me in frankness, he should have taken me by the hand, and he

should have said to me: "My brother, I have changed my opinion in respect to your doctrinal views. I believe them to be essentially erroneous; and I must, in the discharge of a good conscience,"—do what? Go to the newspapers? assail you before the public? represent you as a heretic? cut up your influence? tie your hands from doing good? No; I must "bring you to the Presbytery. I must prefer charges against you, and I must have a decision in respect to the opinions you hold." Had he done this,—had my brother met me so,—I would have honored him, I would have wept upon his bosom for his brotherly frankness, blended with unblenching integrity.

And now, as to what has been said about perpetual quarrels in this Presbytery, I deny the fact. We have had no quarrels. There has not an unkind word passed between my brother Wilson and myself, nor have I any knowledge that he entertains towards me the least personal animosity; although I admit that when two walk so contrary to each other, they are in danger of it. Our differences are Ecclesiastical only; and I am always wounded when I hear it said that we have quarrelled. When I came here and perceived that ministerial disputation had got into the public papers, my whole influence was exerted to silence the paper controversy; and it was done. And, although there was much in the opposing paper that was grievous to be borne; although advantage was taken of the prejudices which prevailed in the West against men coming from the Eastern part of the Union; and although strenuous efforts were employed to stir up that feeling, and direct it against myself and my ministry; and although broad caricatures were given of the doctrines I held and openly taught,—I never wrote so much as a line or a word in reply; but, when I discovered that the chafing of mind

inevitably produced by these things was finding its way into my church,—when I saw the fire rapidly spreading, and like to break out, and to embroil my brother's people and mine in open animosities,—my friends know that I prepared and preached two sermons on the obligation of Christian meekness; and they can testify that the effort was blessed of God, and that there was a great calm. It was, to be sure, impossible but that some excitement should exist, when the ministers of the two churches stood in such an attitude toward each other; but from that time the amount was very small and inconsiderable; and the rumor that we, in this city, were together by the ears, contending and fighting and quarrelling, was false and unfounded. All who are present can bear me witness that no such spirit prevailed. The people were quiet, the ministers were personally courteous; all was visible peace until the time came round for the Presbytery to assemble. But no sooner was it met, than the angels might weep. Brotherly confidence had fled. That sweet and fraternal harmony, which ever ought to mark the gatherings of Christ's ministerial servants, was gone. The "breath of the Almighty was not upon us. The saints were not refreshed; sinners were not converted. Our coming together was not for the better, but always for the worse. But now I pray God that the result of this examination may be such as to put an end forever to this state of things; that it may issue in reëstablishing our mutual confidence in each other's soundness and integrity; or, if I am a heretic, that the fact may be proved, and I may go to my own place.

But, to return to the question respecting the right of private interpretation. If two ministers do not agree in their understanding of the Confession of Faith, let them not contend, and call hard names, and bite and devour each other;

but let them go before the Presbytery, and, if not satisfied there, let them go to the Synod; and, if the sentence of the Synod cannot quiet the minds, let them carry up the question to the General Assembly, and then the man who is wrong, and perseveres in being wrong, must go out of the Church. We are not without a remedy. The constitution has provided for us a competent tribunal. The ministers who differ come before that tribunal on equal ground; the cause is heard, and the question settled; and he who will not submit to the sentence must leave the body. It is, as I said, just like the rights of property. Two men think that they own a certain portion of lands or goods, and both suppose that they have good and valid reasons for that opinion; but, instead of reviling each, or coming to blows, they take their difference before the court, and each has a right to carry it up by appeal, till he reaches the tribunal of last resort; and there the matter is settled. Now, I hope that on this subject I shall never be misunderstood again. I have done my best to make my meaning plain; and, if I am still misunderstood, I must despair of ever being able to remove the misunderstanding. This is my sixth public effort to do so. If this does not succeed, I must give up the attempt.

The question now at issue turns, then, upon an exposition of the Confession of Faith, not merely as a human formula, but as our admitted epitome of what the Bible teaches. I am charged with a fundamental departure from the true intent of the Confession. I claim that I understand and interpret it truly; or that, if there be any variation, it effects only such points of difference as have in every form been decided to be consistent with edification and an honest subscription and an honorable standing in the Church. The Confession is not a mere human composition. The statement,

indeed, is made by man; but it is the statement of what God has said, and is to us who receive it as God's word. Dr. Wilson has said that we are bound to abide by it *so far* as it is consistent with God's Word; but we have settled that, in receiving it as the symbol of our faith. We profess that it is in all its parts according to God's Word. What is its true sense is, in case of dispute, to be settled by the courts above; but we have agreed to submit to it and be bound by it; and if we do not like the final decision of the supreme judicatory, no course is left but to go out of the Church. For — to a man remaining in its fellowship — I deny and repudiate all right of private judgment, in opposition to the public decision of the whole Church.

The whole of the argument on which I am now to enter is an argument that has respect to the true exposition of our Confession of Faith. The argument will take a wide range; but it is all directed to that point. And I am sorry that the point on which the whole turns my brother Wilson did not attempt to explain. He assumed that there is but one meaning to the term *ability*. This I deny. I hold, on the contrary, that it has two meanings, as well in the Bible as in our standards. He admits only one. His labor, therefore, has been labor lost, as it respects me. He admits one sense of the term; but, if our standards admit two, then he has got but one part of the truth; while I contend that I have got both parts of it, and that therefore his argument falls short of the case. It is not my purpose to declaim on a topic like this. I feel that the providence of God has brought both my brother and myself into circumstances of the deepest responsibility. It is my hope that this trial will be made the occasion, in His hand, of dissipating mutual misapprehension, and of bringing forth his own precious truth into clearer light, and establishing

it in a more triumphant and unanswerable manner. I will not disguise the fact that I hope to convince those who have hitherto thought with my brother. I will neither believe nor insinuate that the minds of this Presbytery are so biased that they cannot give an upright judgment. I do not think Dr. Wilson himself meant to convey such an idea. I do expect to convince every minister and every elder, and I am almost sure I shall do it. I rest not this confidence upon myself, but upon the cause I advocate. I cherish the hope, because I know what truth is, and what human nature is; and I am perfectly sure that when the question comes to be fairly stated and distinctly understood, there is no man here who will say I am guilty of heresy. I will even go further than this, and say that I expect to convince my brother Wilson himself; and I have told him so. O! if he would but have given me a chance to do so two years ago! How would our hands have been mutually strengthened, and how might the cause of truth and righteousness have been advanced by our united efforts! I mourn to think how we have both suffered from the want of such an explanation. I grieve to reflect upon the pulling down, and the holding back, and all the want of cordial and brotherly coöperation. And I do trust that God has brought us to this point that all the misunderstanding may be cleared up, and all misrepresentation forever cease. I shall labor for this end as hard as ever I labored with a convicted sinner to bring him to the Lord my Master; and I hope I shall succeed.

I am very sensible that I have undertaken a great work, in attempting to convince my brother on this subject. And I am aware that it is incumbent on me to go to the business wittingly; and I mean to. The task of expounding important doctrinal truth is not a light, extempore affair. Just exposi-

tion is regulated by fixed laws, laws as fixed as those which regulate the motions of the universe; because they are founded in truth, and in the nature of things. And what are these rules and principles?

1. The first is that no writing or instrument of any kind is to be expounded in contradiction to itself. So that, if there are two possible interpretations, that which harmonizes the instrument with itself is to be received as the true interpretation. For it is not to be presumed that a company of pious and sensible men, with full deliberation and under the highest responsibility, will draw up a paper which contradicts itself. They may through infirmity do this, but no such presumption is to be admitted, *a priori*.

2. The instrument is to be explained according to the known nature and attributes of the subject. Thus, when man is spoken of in terms borrowed from the natural world, and these terms, literally received, would imply impotency, we are not to carry over their physical meaning into the moral kingdom. When God says he will take away the heart of stone, if he was speaking of a mountain we might well understand that he meant to remove the granite which was in the midst of it. But when he applies this language to a moral being, to a free agent, the language is not to be taken as literal, but as figurative; and as meaning to take away a moral quality, namely, hatred to God and aversion to his law.

3. The instrument is to be construed with reference to controversies and import of terms which prevailed at the time it was written, and the meaning of theological technics employed in them.

Dr. Wilson has gone to Johnson's dictionary to find out the meaning of theological terms. But he ought to have remembered that there are few dictionaries which undertake to define

the meaning of either theological or of law terms. The technics of one are as much out of the ordinary road as those of the other. Physicians would not expect to find in an ordinary dictionary the definition of medical words; and the same holds of every profession. They all have technics of their own, for which you go in vain to a general dictionary. I say you must go to the time when the instrument was written, and inquire what was then the import of the technical words and phrases employed in the instrument to be expounded. So, if we would understand the Confession of Faith, we must find out in what sense the words "guilt" and "punishment" were employed by the theologians of that day. For a right explication of those terms will go far towards settling the meaning of the whole Confession. Dr. Wilson cannot but know that language never stands still, because society never stands still. The meaning of a word at this day is not necessarily the same with the meaning of that word two hundred years ago; and so every sound lawyer will tell you. *They* have to go back to the days of Judge Hale and Queen Elizabeth. It will not do to go to Webster's dictionary at this day, if we would rightly interpret ancient statutes; no more will it do in respect to the Confession of Faith.

4. It must be interpreted by a comparison with anterior and cotemporaneous creeds and authors: in a word, by the theological *usus loquendi* of the age; because this is according to analogy. The Reformers were all the same sort of men; they were all, with some slight variation, placed in substantially the same circumstances, and it is wonderful to see how much alike the creeds adopted in different parts of Christendom were. Now, if the ancient meaning of terms be in any case different from the meaning of the same terms in our day, the ancient meaning cuts its way. For our creeds were born of them.

And that sense of terms, which was the analogical meaning of those who had all around them the authors of cotemporaneous creeds, must be our guide in construction.

5. The instrument must be interpreted according to the reigning philosophy of the day in which it was written; and

6. According to the intuitive perceptions and the common sense and consciousness of all mankind.

To illustrate the propriety of this rule, let me give an example. I know that there is a propensity to reject all philosophy when we come to the subject of creeds; and yet there is not a human being that does not necessarily employ a philosophy of some sort in interpreting the Bible, and in interpreting every creed founded upon it. The New Testament cannot rightly be understood without a knowledge of the philosophy of the Gnostics. And, in like manner, a man must know what was the philosophy of the Armenian system, in order rightly to apprehend that portion of the creed which relates to that subject. I will only say, in respect to the intuitive perceptions of men as a rule of exposition, that it is God who made men, and that he made both their body and their mind; and the Bible, without entering on a system of pathology, everywhere takes it for granted that God thoroughly understands human nature. And here I will observe incidentally, that it is a good way, and one of the best ways, to study mental philosophy, to collect from the Bible that which it assumes; and this was the only way in which I first studied it. In conclusion, I observe that to enter upon the Confession of Faith, for the purpose of exposition, without these attendant lamps, is to insure misinterpretation and contention and every evil work.

I commence with the subject of Free Agency, or the Natural Ability of Man, as the foundation of obligation and moral government.

I begin with this first because, as Dr. Wilson has said, it is "the hinge of the whole controversy." This is eminently true. It is the different theories of free agency and accountability which have, in all ages, agitated the Church. There is not a discussion about doctrine, at this time, in the Presbyterian Church, which does not originate in discrepant opinions respecting the created constitutional powers of man as a free agent, and the grounds of moral obligation and personal accountability. Settle the philosophy of free agency,—what are the powers of a free agent,—how they are put together, and how they operate in personal accountable action,—and controversy among all the friends of Christ will cease. It has been often said that it never can be settled. I believe no such thing. The perplexities of the schoolmen are passing away, and the symptoms of approximation to an enlightened and settled opinion among all evangelical denominations are beginning to appear. I have no discoveries to publish on this subject,—no favorite views of my own to propagate. It has been my great desire to finish my course and keep the faith without any. The doctrines of free agency and natural ability, which I hold and advocate, have been the revealed doctrines of the Church from the beginning. They are not new divinity, nor new school; and, though I am compelled to admit that there are some in the Church who, when they are correctly explained, do not hold them, the number, in my belief, is very small, who do not, when all misapprehension is removed, believe the doctrines just as I believe them. They are also fundamental doctrines, which, if misinterpreted, will always environ the Calvinistic system with invincible prejudice and odium without, and fill it with fierce conflicts within. But, when correctly understood, they will pour the stream of

truth, pure, and full, and clear as crystal, through all the channels of the associated system.

The doctrine claimed by the prosecutor as the true doctrine of the Confession and the Bible is, that to fallen man there remains no ability of any kind or degree to obey the Gospel; that, though he is a free agent, it is a free agency which includes no ability of any kind to obey God; and that none is necessary to constitute perfect obligation to obey, and perfect accountability for disobedience; — that the obligation to obey may be infinite, and the punishment for disobedience just and eternal, where the obedience claimed is a natural impossibility, as really as the creation of the world, or the raising of the dead.

Dr. Wilson has made a distinct avowal that free agency and moral obligation to obey law do not include *any ability of any kind*.

Dr. WILSON. — I limited that avowal to man in his fallen state.

Dr. BEECHER. — Yes, so I understood it. We are talking about man in his fallen state. Dr. Wilson, then, admits that it requires no *ability of any sort*, in fallen man, to make him an accountable agent, and a subject of God's moral government.

Dr. WILSON. — With respect to fallen man, *I do*.

Now, it must be admitted that in this avowal Dr. Wilson has the merit of magnanimous honesty. He is fairly out on a subject where, with many a man for an opponent, I should have had to ferret him out. There can, at least, be no doubt as to what Dr. Wilson does hold. If we are to go to Synod, this point will be clear; and when the report is published, no man can misunderstand this part of it. It is seldom that we meet a man who would be willing to march right up to such a

position, without winking or mystification. But Dr. Wilson has done it unflinchingly and thoroughly. He interprets the Confession of Faith and the Bible as teaching that God may and does command men to perform natural impossibilities, and justly punish them forever for not obeying,—though they could no more obey than they could create a world! And he has riveted the matter by his mental philosophy of the will. Instead of supposing a mind with powers of agency, acting freely in view of motives, he supposes the will to be entirely dependent on the constitution and condition of body and mind, and external circumstances; and controlled by these as absolutely as straws on the bosom of a river are controlled by the motions of the water.

It is claimed, then, by the prosecutor, that the Confession of Faith and the Bible teach that fallen man has no ability of any kind to obey God, and that none is necessary to perfect obligation and the just desert of eternal punishment.

Now, my alleged heresy consists in believing and teaching that the constitutional powers of a free agent, including the possibility of their correct exercise in obedience, are necessary to moral obligation, and to reward and punishment, under the benevolent, wise, and just government of God.

And I do hold and teach, that while to a just *liability* to all the consequences of the fall on our constitution and character, no ability of any kind on our part to prevent or avert the calamity existed, or was necessary,—the evil coming on his posterity, as the curse of his disobedience through our relation to him as our federal head,—yet, to a personal accountability to law and desert of punishment, ability of some kind or degree is certainly indispensable. Some possibility of obedience in adult man is indispensable to personal obligation, and a just punishment for transgression. Liability to be

involved in the consequences, natural and moral, of the conduct of those who represent us, is a law of human society, and probably a law of the social intelligent universe,—and, as it existed and operated in the case of Adam and his posterity, is doubtless a wise, benevolent, and just constitution. But, while a liability to suffer the consequences of another's conduct, on the ground of a just constitution of things, demands no ability to avert the evil, accountability for personal transgression does require some ability to refuse the evil and choose the good. There must exist the faculties and powers of a free agent, involving a possibility of right action. Faculties that can do nothing, and powers that have no relation of a cause to its effect,—that is, action,—are nonentities. A free agency that cannot act at all, in any way, is no free agency; and a free agency that has no power of a right action is, in that respect, no free agency. There must be an agent qualified to act as he is required to act,—something in his constitution which qualifies him to be governed by law, and rewards and punishments,—as matter and animals are not qualified. There must be something which qualifies for obedience, and creates obligation which renders obedience possible; and makes it reasonable that it should be rendered and rewarded, and just that disobedience should be punished.

Now, I have taught, and I do hold, with our Confession, that the mind of man, though in a fallen state, is still endued by its Creator “with that natural liberty that it is neither forced, nor by any absolute necessity of nature determined to do good or evil, nor is violence offered to the will of the creature,”—nor is the liberty or contingency of second causes (that is, the power of the soul to choose life or death in the view of motives) taken away, but rather established. This is what I mean, and all I mean, by the natural ability of man to obey the Gospel.

Material causes, while upheld by Heaven, are adequate to their proper effects; and the mind of man, though fallen, is, while upheld, a cause of action sufficient in respect to the possibility of obedience, to create infinite obligation to obey. The fall perverted, but did not destroy, the free agency of man. It perverted the use of his powers in action, but did not destroy the existence of those powers which distinguish man as a subject of moral government from animals, and which lie at the foundation of all obligation. This is my alleged heresy; and to decide that it is a heresy is to decide that the Confession of Faith and the Bible teach that to fallen man no ability of any sort is necessary to constitute infinite obligation, and a just desert of eternal punishment.

But, while I thus insist on the existence of the commensurate powers of an agent, as essential to free agency and accountability, I do not believe, and have never taught, that *actual obedience* is essential to free agency; or that the free agency which suffices to create a perfect obligation to obey ever suffices, without the special influence of the Holy Spirit, to *secure* in fallen man even the lowest degree of holy obedience. On the contrary, I hold and teach that such a change in the constitution of man was produced by the fall as creates a universal and prevalent propensity to actual sin,—to the setting of the affections on things below, and loving the creature more than God;—preventing in all men the existence of holiness, and securing the existence of that actual depravity, which is enmity against God, not subject to his law, neither indeed can be,—a bias which neutralizes the power of truth and motives to reconcile men to God, till it is overcome by the special influence of the Holy Spirit in regeneration; and which, though impaired by that event, still remains in the regenerate until removed entirely by the Spirit, in making the soul of the

saint meet for heaven. I only say, with our Confession, that this bias to actual sin acts not in the form of a coercive cause, creating a fatal and irresistible necessity of sinning; and of course constitutes no excuse for actual sin, and no mitigation of the curse due to it, or abatement of God's boundless mercy in providing redemption for incorrigible man. This impediment to obedience, arising from a prevalent bias of nature and actual aversion to spiritual obedience, is called, in the Confession and the Bible, inability to obey, on account, as I suppose, of the same certainty between their existence and moral result that appertains to natural causes and their effects; and it is called a moral inability, to indicate that, though wrong, as securing wrong action with unfailing certainty, it does so not by a fatal necessity of sinning, but by an unnecessary, unreasonable, inexcusable aversion of the soul to God and his reasonable service.

While I teach, therefore, the ability of man as a free agent, and as the ground of obligation, I teach his moral inability as a sinner,—the subject of the carnal mind, which is enmity against God,—not subject to his law, neither indeed can be.

In the true sense of the terms as now explained, and as employed in the Confession, and in the Bible, and in the common and well-understood language of men, I teach that “no mere man, since the fall, has been able perfectly to keep the commandments of God; and that the natural man cannot understand and know the things of the Spirit of God, because they are spiritually discerned; and that no man can come to Christ, except the Father draw him.”

I proceed now to show that the preceding account of man's free agency, and natural ability, and of his total depravity and moral impotency, contains the doctrine of our Confession, and of the Bible.

The point at issue is not whether fallen man ever did or ever will act right in a spiritual sense, without the regeneration of the Holy Spirit. It is admitted and insisted that he never did, and never will. The point at issue is, in what manner the certainty of the continuous wrong action of the mind comes to pass. Does it come to pass coërced or uncoërced by necessity? Does fallen man choose under the influence of such a constitution of body, and mind, and motive, that every volition bears the relation of an effect to a natural and necessitating cause, rendering any other choice than the one which comes to pass, impossible in existing circumstances? Or is fallen man still an agent so constituted that in every act of choice he is unconstrained and uncoërced by any necessity, like that which binds natural effects to their causes? Is the soul so exempt from the laws of a natural necessity that it is never forced to choose wrong; there existing, in every case, the possibility and obligation growing out of the possibility of a different, or contrary choice? The latter is the view of free agency and accountability which I shall endeavor to establish as the doctrine of the Confession and the Bible; and,

I. There is no reason to doubt that God is able to create free agents, who, being sustained and placed under the illumination and influence of his laws and perfect government, shall be able to obey or disobey in the regular exercise of the powers of their own mind.

The alleged impossibility of created self-existing agents, acting independently of God, does not touch the point; for the supposition of agency able to choose the good and refuse the evil does not imply the mind's self-existence, but the efficacy of its powers while upheld; and it might as well be said that God cannot create natural causes, which, while he

upholds them, can, by their own power, produce an effect, as that he cannot create mind, which, while upheld by him, is capable of acting right or wrong, under the requirements and motives of his government. Both lead to Pantheism, denying all created causes, and making God the only cause and the only agent in the universe.

There is no perceptible difficulty in creating mind, more than in creating matter; in creating active, than passive existence; or thinking than unthinking, voluntary than involuntary being. It is just as conceivable that God should create mind endowed with an energy which, while it is sustained, is commensurate to every requisite action under his government, by its own power; as that he should create passive matter, dependent for every movement and change on external causation.

How God can originate existence of any kind is incomprehensible, but no one can prove it to be impossible. The creation of an intelligent universe, of free, accountable minds, capable of all the responsibilities of a perfect, eternal government, is just as conceivable, therefore, as the creation of hills and valleys, plants and animals.

II. If it be possible to create and govern mind upon the principles of free agency, and a perfect and permanent moral government, the presumption is strong that this is, in fact, the divine plan. What other conceivable course could the wisdom of God devise, so comprehensive of good as the creation of a universe of mind, with its constitutional susceptibilities, and active and social and voluntary powers, qualified for all the results of a government of perfect laws, perfectly administered?

It is self-evident that the creation of unorganized matter could not illustrate the copiousness and power of the Divine benevolence. God might amuse himself with curious work-

manship, but how could he impart happiness to unorganized matter? It is equally clear that mere *animal life* falls, in its capacity of enjoyment, unspeakably below the capabilities of mind. How limited is the range of the monotonous appetites! How narrow the circle of mere fleeting, instinctive action; and how feeble the momentary tie of natural affection, compared with its corroboration by ties of blood, and habits of intercourse, and the illumination of reason, and the powers of memory, and the light of an anticipated eternity of unextinguished, purified, augmented and reciprocated friendship!

How immeasurable is that expansion of capacity in man, above the animal, which opens the eye of his intellect upon the character, will, and government of God; which brings him into fellowship with his Maker, and opens before him the joys of a blessed immortality, associated with a reasonable service, and benevolent activity, under the high and perfect guidance of Heaven!

A single MIND, through a duration which will never end, may be capable of more enjoyment than it were, in the nature of things, possible to pour through the narrow channels of animal instinct and appetite. The river of pleasure is of course represented as flowing from the throne of God and the Lamb; that is, as being the result of his intelligent creation and moral government: what an ocean of blessedness, compared to the drops of the bucket which any other conceivable mode of being could have received! A universe, that can live in the past, present and future, and experience a copiousness and variety of blessedness unknown to the moping animal! To have stopped at the limits of animalism, and forborne to create mind, would have been to prefer the ray to the sun—the atom to the universe. It would seem to be manifest and certain, then, that for the most perfect manifestation of

his wisdom and benevolence, the Supreme Intelligence would call into being around him other beings like himself, to hold communion with him and with one another, and after his own illustrious example to be made happy by their own benevolent activity in doing good; would create *mind*, and wake up intelligence round about his throne, for the mirrors of creation to throw back the light of his glory upon,—hearts to burn with love, and wills to obey, and energy to act, with high deservings of good or evil;—a universe so powerful in intellect as to be able to look with open face and steadfast vision upon the strong light of his glory, and so capacious of heart as to be able to receive the tide of joy which his benevolence shall pour through the soul;—so energetic as to sustain the strong emotion which his excellence produces, and to perform forever untiringly the glorious work of benevolence;—and so free that all its actions under the guidance of law shall be its own, and invested with all the attributes of a perfect accountability, which in all its consequences of good or evil shall reach through eternity; *social*, also, we should expect it to be, holding affectionate communion with God and other minds; capable of moral excellence, and all the fulness of perfect friendship and society. Obliterate conscious intelligence, and voluntariness, and accountability, from the human mind,—disrobe it of its spontaneous affections and mutual complacencies,—and you put down the race to the mere caricature of manhood.

There must exist the power of intellect, perception, comparison, judgment, conscience, affections, taste, memory, the discursive power of thought, the power of volition, and those exercises of soul which constitute personal excellence and inspire affection.

It is only in the possession of these powers that individual

happiness is enjoyed. Convince a man that he is only the instinctive animal of a day, and you brutalize him. We love and are loved, admire and are admired, we are praised or blamed, on the ground of a real mental energy of our own, capable of such high and eternal responsibilities. Blot out the intelligence and spontaneous affection of husband and wife, of parent and child, and the family is ruined ; the moral attractions cease, its sun goes down, and it becomes a den of animals.

In the nature of things, the existence of a universe of mind, of free agents, of rational, social, accountable beings, would seem to be indispensable to the highest illustration and expression of the goodness of God.

III. God has actually made free agents, who were able, in the exercise of their created powers, to choose either way,—life or death.

This is the doctrine of our Confession and Catechisms. "Man in his state of innocency had freedom and power to will and to do that which is good and well-pleasing to God ; but yet mutably, so that he might fall from it."—Confess. ch. IX. sec. 2.

"Our first parents, being left to the freedom of their own will, fell from the state wherein they were created, by sinning against God."—Shorter Catechism, p. 322.

It is the testimony of the Bible, "Lo, this only have I found, that God made man upright, but they have sought out many inventions."—Ecc. 7 : 29.

It is a part of the recorded history of the intelligent universe, and of God's moral government, that the *angels* kept not their first estate, and that man being in honor abode not.

Now, had Adam, created holy, been free to choose obedi-

ence *only*, and *that* by a natural, constitutional, unavoidable necessity, so that by the power of natural causation his choice must be in accordance with his character and constitution of mind, and the constitution of things around him, or the active principle which prevailed in his nature when volition took place; how could he be said to have power to will that which is good, yet mutably so that he might fall from it, and how could he possibly fall? But he had power to stand and power to fall; and that is the essence of free agency, and was the ground of his accountability.

IV. Nothing is apparent, in the nature of the fall, from which to infer necessarily the destruction of the constitutional powers of free agency in Adam or his posterity. It was an overt act,—an actual sin. “In evil hour he put forth the hand, and plucked and ate the fruit forbidden.” But does actual sin destroy the possibility of right action? It creates aversion,—it secures the certainty, under law, of continuance in evil, if unreclaimed by a mediator and almighty power. But does it do this by a constitutional necessity, like the power of a natural cause to its effect? If so, the adulterer, and the drunkard, and the liar, would like to alleviate their remorse, and quiet their fearful looking for of fiery indignation, by the consoling information that the more they live after the flesh, the deeper the oblivion of accountability, and crime, and punishment.

But the Bible nowhere teaches, and the Confession expressly denies, that Adam or his posterity lost their powers of agency by the fall, and became impotent to good on the ground of a natural impossibility of obedience.

Did the change of character, then, which the fall occasioned, preclude the possibility of subsequent obedience in Adam? What was the change? It was the utter loss of all holiness,

and the prevalence of entire depravity,—every imagination of the thoughts of his heart became evil, and only evil, continually. But does total depravity render spiritual obedience a natural impossibility? How? Did the perfect holiness of Adam render sinning impossible? How, then, did he sin? Did God help him? Did the devil force him? But, if perfect holiness does not destroy the possibility of sinning, how should perfect sinfulness destroy the possibility of obedience? Is there not as much in the “state of man” as holy, “including all his rational, animal and moral powers, with the active principle which prevails in him,” to make disobedience impossible to a holy mind, as in the same state of things in an unholy mind, to render obedience impossible? But, if perfect holiness does not destroy the natural possibility of sinning, how does perfect sinfulness destroy the natural possibility of obedience? And, if the fall did not destroy the natural powers of agency in Adam which rendered obedience possible, obligatory, and a reasonable service; how should it destroy in his posterity those powers and responsibilities which it did not obliterate in himself? Has the fall overacted, and come down with greater desolation on the represented than on the federal head and representative of his race?

V. That man possesses, since the fall, the powers of agency requisite to obligation, on the ground of the possibility of obedience, is a matter of consciousness. Not one of the powers of mind which constituted ability before the fall have been obliterated by that event. All that has ever been conceived, or that can now be conceived, as entering into the constitution of a free agent, capable of choosing life or death, or which did exist in Adam when he could and did obey, yet mutable, survive the fall. The intellect, the conscience, the susceptibilities of the soul to pleasure and pain, and the heart,

including the will and affections of the soul,—all these as certainly exist, and as plainly exist, as the five senses.

That nothing has been subtracted by the fall from the powers of agency requisite to the possibility of obedience, is strongly evident from the fact, that no one, by the most careful analysis of the mind, has ever been able to detect and name the fatal deficiency. The motive to make such an exculpatory discovery, and throw off hated obligation and feared punishment, has been as powerful as the terrors of eternity; and the effort as constant as the flow of ages, and urged with all that talent and ingenuity and learning could apply, and the wisdom from beneath inspire, to establish the excusable impotency of man; and to this day the effort has been abortive. To appearance, the powers of the mind, and the law of God, and the glorious Gospel, and the providence of God, are, as they should be, to render obedience a reasonable service, and impenitence and unbelief without excuse; and where, amid the constitutional powers of agency, the defect lies, has never been discovered,—what it is, has never been told,—or, that there is any such defect, proved.

VI. Choice, in its very nature, implies the possibility of a different or contrary election to that which is made. There is always an alternative to that which the mind decides on, with the conscious power of choosing either. In the simplest form of alternative, it is to choose or not to choose in a given way; but, in most cases, the alternatives lie between two or many objects of choice presented to the mind; and, if you deny to mind this alternative power,—if you insist that by a constitution anterior to choice, of the nature of a natural cause producing its effect, the choice which takes place can come, and cannot but come into being, and that none other than this can by any possibility exist,—you have as perfect a fatality of

choice as ever Pagan, or Atheist, or Antinomian conceived. The question of free will is not whether man *chooses*; this is notorious,—none deny it; but whether his choice is free as opposed to a fatal necessity, as opposed to the laws of instinct and natural causation; whether it is the act of a mind so qualified for choice, as to decide between alternatives, uncoerced by the energy of a natural cause necessitating its effect: whether it is the act of an agent who might have abstained from the choice he made, and made one which he did not. To speak of choice as being free, which is produced by the laws of a natural necessity, and which cannot but be *when* and *what* it is, more than the effects of natural causes can govern the time, and manner, and qualities of their being, is a perversion of language. The doctrine of the Christian fathers, and of Luther and Calvin, and all the Protestant Confessors and standard writers, is not merely that men act by volition or choice,—the choice being the effect of natural causes, as really and entirely as the falling of rain, or the electric spark, or the involuntary shock that attends it. They meant and taught that the will is high above the coercion of natural causation,—the fatality of the Stoics, Gnostics, Manicheans, or Epicureans; that it is the action of the mind of an intelligent agent, free as opposed to coercion or constraint; so that if the mental decision is right, it is properly associated with a reward, and if wrong, with punishment,—an act which might, in possibility, have been refrained from, or resolved on, when declined. This is what our Confession teaches and means, when it says that “God hath endued the will of man with that natural liberty that it is neither forced, nor by any absolute necessity of nature determined, to good or evil;” and that God’s decrees, which extend to every event, “offer no violence to the will of the creature, and take

not away, but rather establish the liberty and contingency of second causes ;” meaning by contingency, as Dr. Twiss says every university scholar knows, “ things which come to pass avoidably, and with a possibility of not coming to pass.” This is the language of our own Confession in respect to the voluntary actions of men as contingent ; that is, as avoidable, and with a possibility of not coming to pass. To illustrate the fatality of an agency in which choice is the unavoidable effect of a natural constitutional and coërcive causation, let us suppose an extended manufactory, all whose wheels, like those in Ezekiel’s vision, are inspired with intelligence, and instinct with life, some crying holy ! holy ! as they rolled, and others aloud blaspheming God,—all voluntary in their praises and blasphemies, but the volitions, like the motions of the wheels themselves, produced by the great water-wheel and the various bands which keep the motion and the adoration and the blasphemy a-going,—how much accountability would attach to these voluntary praises and blasphemies produced by the laws of water-power, and what would it avail to say, as a reason for justifying God in punishing these blasphemies, O ! but they are free, they are voluntary, they choose to blaspheme ? Truly, indeed, they blaspheme voluntarily ; but their choice to do so is necessary in the same sense that the motion of the great wheel, which the water, by the power of gravity, turns, is necessary, and just as destitute of accountability.

In this account of free agency the ablest writers concur. Edwards says, “ In every act of will whatever, the mind chooses one thing rather than another, the will’s determining between the two is voluntary determining ; and to act voluntarily is to act electively where things are chosen.” “ There are faculties of mind,” he says, “ and capacity of nature, and

everything else sufficient but a disposition. Nothing is wanting but a will." "A moral agent is a being that is capable of those actions that have a moral quality, and which can properly be denominated good or evil." Edwards the younger says, "If by power be meant natural power, I grant that we have such a power to choose, not only one of several things equally eligible, if any such there be, but one of things ever so unequally eligible, and to take the least eligible." "Liberty or freedom must mean freedom from something; if it be a freedom from coaction or natural necessity, that is what we mean by freedom." Buck, on the article "Necessity," says, "Necessity is, whatever is done by a cause or power that is irresistible, in which sense it is opposed to freedom. Man is a necessary agent, if all his actions be so determined, by the causes preceding each action, that not one past action could possibly not have come to pass, or have been otherwise than it hath been, nor one future action can possibly not come to pass, or be otherwise than it shall be. On the other hand, it is asserted that he is a free agent, if he be able at any time, under the causes and circumstances he then is, to do different things; or, in other words, if he be not unavoidably determined in every point of time by the circumstances he is in, and the causes he is under, to do any one thing he does, and not possibly to do any other thing." And Dr. Woods says, "The power of choosing right or wrong makes him [man] a moral agent; his actually choosing wrong makes him a sinner."

VII. Choice, without the possibility of other or contrary choice, is the immemorial doctrine of fatalism.

I say not that all who assert the natural inability of man are fatalists. I charge them not with holding or admitting the consequences of their theory, and I mean nothing unkind

or invidious in the proposition I have laid down ; and truth and argument are not invidious. But I say that the theory of choice — that it is what it is by a natural, constitutional necessity, and that a man cannot help choosing what he does choose, and can by no possibility choose otherwise — is the doctrine of fatalism in all its forms. That there are *laws of choice*, so uniform that in the same circumstances the action of mind can be anticipated with great certainty, is not denied. That *choice* is in accordance with the state of body and mind, and character, and external circumstances, may be admitted, or that it is as the greatest apparent good is, may be admitted ; but that it is so necessarily, to the exclusion of all ability of any kind to be other than it is, cannot be admitted, without abandoning the field of God's government of accountable agents, and going to the very centre of the region of fatalism. The certainty of choice in given circumstances does not decide the manner of the certainty, as one of natural necessity, without power to the contrary. That a man always, in the same circumstances, chooses alike, is no evidence that he had no ability of any kind to choose otherwise, and chooses by a fatal necessity. Uniformity of choice, in the same circumstances, is just as consistent with free agency and natural ability, as with necessity and fatalism. But that choice, without the power of contrary choice, is fatalism in all its diversified forms, is obvious to inspection, and a matter of historical record. The fatality of the Stoics was an eternal series of cause and effect, controlling by inexorable necessity all events, from which the will of gods and men was not exempt.*

* The free agency advocated by them was, as Ritter has plainly shown, merely exemption in choice from the necessitating influence of external objects, and not from an internal necessity of choice created by our

The fatalism of Epicurus was the atomic theory, the fortuitous concourse of atoms,—intelligence in results without an intelligent being, design without a designer, and choice, the product of the chance movements of material atoms.

The Gnostic fatality made sin an eternal property of matter; and the contamination of mind the result of bodily inoculation and contact, and by an unavoidable necessity precluding freedom of will as utterly as the communication of disease by virus.

The Manicheans held with the Gnostics to the corruption of matter, and also to sin in the essence or substance of the soul; both making sin a matter of necessity, independent of choice, and controlling volition, as natural causes produce their effects.

The fatalism of Spinoza was material and pantheistic, making God identical with the world and the only agent, and himself subject to a self-existent, eternal necessity of action, and the author alike of sin and holiness.

The fatalism of the French revolutionary atheists was Sadducean: that all existence is material, and all its combinations and changes the result of material laws in the form of natural cause and effect; that mind is matter, that volition is the result of material action; and that death, the decomposition of the body, is an eternal sleep. This is the fatalism of Robert Dale Owen and Fanny Wright.

The fatalism of Hobbs and Hume was made to approximate a little more to the confines of rationality and truth, but not near enough to leave necessity behind, and bring them

natural constitution and propensities, which are forced upon us by a universal fatality, so that we will according to our propensities, even as a round stone necessarily rolls down a mountain-side by reason of its shape and weight.

under the government of God, as free, accountable creatures. If they admitted the existence of mind and spirit distinct from matter (of which there is some doubt), they clothed motives, as the antecedents of volition, with the coërcive power of material causes to their effects, and thus destroyed the liberty of the will, and introduced a universal coërcive necessity of choice, just in all cases as it is, without the possibility of one more or less, or different from those which actually come to pass.

The necessity of Priestley and Belsham was material, and all volition in accordance with the laws and action of material causes. That motives produce volition necessarily, on the same principle that natural causes produce their effects; so that choice, as the spontaneous action of mind, enlightened and guided and influenced by law and motive, has no existence, but is in all cases the passive effect of antecedent natural causation, as inconsistent with accountability and desert of punishment as the sparks that rise by their less specific gravity than that of the surrounding atmosphere, or the rain-drops that fall by their superior gravity to the sustaining element.

VIII. The supposition of accountability for choice, coerced by a natural necessity, is contrary to the nature of things as God has constituted them. The relation of cause and effect pervades the universe. The natural world is full of it. It is the basis of all science, and of all intellectual operations with respect to mind. Can the intellect be annihilated, and thinking go on? No more can the power of choice be annihilated, and free agency go on. Is there not a capacity of choice, with power of contrary choice, in angels? and was there not in Adam before he fell? But all the powers of the mind, perception, association, abstraction, memory, taste, and feeling, conscience, and capacity of choice, which

were required and did exist when man was created free, are still required to constitute free agency; and can it be that when all which capacitated Adam freely to choose is demolished, that the Lord still requires of his posterity that they, without the powers of their ancestor, should exercise the perfect obedience that was demanded of him? Do the requisitions of law continue when all the necessary antecedents to obedience are destroyed? Has God required effects without a cause? If he has, then he has, in the case of man, violated the analogies of the whole universe; for in the natural world there is no effect without a cause, nor is there in the intellectual world. How, then, can it be that the same analogy does not hold in the moral world, where there exist such tremendous responsibilities? What! will God send men to hell for not doing impossibilities — for not producing a moral effect without a cause?

IX. The supposition of continued obligation and responsibility, after all the powers of causation are gone, is contrary to the common sense and intuitive perception of all mankind. All men can see and do see that there can be no effect without a cause. They are so constituted that they cannot help seeing and feeling this. That nothing cannot produce something, is an intuitive perception, the basis of that illustrious demonstration by which we prove the being of a God. For, if one thing may exist without a cause, all things may; and we are yet to get hold of the first strand of an argument to prove the existence of a God. All men see that to require right volition without a competent cause of choice in mind, would be to require an effect without a cause. What is the foundation of accountability? It is the possession of something to be accounted for. But, if a man does not possess the capacity of choice with power to the contrary, what has he

got to be accountable for? He sees and feels that he is not to blame; and you cannot with more infallible certainty make men believe, and fix them in the belief, that they are not responsible, than to teach them that they have not the power of choosing, only as they do actually choose. It is the way to make a man a fatalist. But you cannot do it. God has put that in the breast of man which cannot be reasoned away. Every man knows and feels that he has power and is responsible. Men never associate blame with the qualities of will or action, on the supposition of a natural impossibility that they should be otherwise, but always on the supposition that they were able to have chosen or acted otherwise. What would be the education of a family, on this principle? There is not a child five years old but understands this. He breaks a plate or spoils a piece of furniture, and, when he apprehends punishment, he pleads, with confidence, that he did not mean to do it. His language is, "I could n't help it," and on that plea he rests. The child understands it; and the parent understands it; and all human laws are built upon it. Why is not an idiot punished when he commits a crime? For the lack of that natural ability which alone makes him responsible. Why are not lunatics treated as subjects of law? Because their reason has been so injured as to destroy free agency, and with it to put an end to their accountability. Look at the government of a family. If one child is an idiot, the parent does not treat that child as he does the rest. He feels and admits that the poor idiot is not responsible for its acts; and the same principle holds in the case of monomania, where the mind is deranged in one particular respect. I was myself acquainted with a case of this sort; an individual in whom all the powers were perfect, save that the power of association was wanting,—that faculty by which one thought

draws on another,—and she was a perfect curiosity. She would commence talking on one subject, and before the sentence was complete she would commence on another, which had not the remotest connection with it, and in an instant pass to a third, which was foreign from both; and thus she would hop, skip and jump, over all the world,—there was no concatenation of thought. Now, suppose this woman had been required to deliver a Fourth-of-July oration, admitting that she possessed all the knowledge and talent in other respects necessary to such a task;—on her failing to do it, is she to be taken to the whipping-post, and lacerated for that which she wanted the natural ability to do? The magistrate who would award such a sentence would at once become infamous; and shall not the Judge of all the earth do right? Will the glorious and righteous Jehovah reap where he has not sown, and gather where he has not strewed? Will he require obedience where all power to obey is gone? Men do not require that, when even one faculty is gone; and will God, when *all* are gone, come and take his creature by the throat and say to him, Pay that thou owest? That was the libel which the slothful servant brought against his Lord: “I knew thee that thou wast a hard master, reaping where thou hast not sown, and gathering where thou hast not strown, and I was afraid.” Who would not be afraid, under such a ruler? Who could tell what would come next? God requires according to that which a man hath, and not according to that which he hath not. Were it otherwise, who could tell what wantonness and what oppression might not proceed from heaven’s high throne?

X. It is a matter of universal consciousness, that men are free to choose right or wrong, life or death.

Of nothing are men more thoroughly informed, or more

competent to judge unerringly, than in respect to their mode of action, whether it is coërced or free.

Testimony may mislead, and the senses by disease may deceive; but consciousness is the end of controversy; its evidence cannot be increased, and, if it be distrusted, there is no alternative but universal scepticism. Our consciousness of the mode of mental action in choice, as uncoërced and free, equals our consciousness of existence itself; and the man who doubts either gives indications of needing medical treatment, instead of argument. When a man does wrong, and then reflects upon the act, he feels that he might have abstained; and so when he looks forward to a future action. When, for example, he deliberates whether he shall commit a theft, he listens to the pleading of cowardice or conscience on the one side, and of covetousness and laziness on the other. All these things come up and are looked at, and, after considering them, he at length screws up his mind to the point, and does the deed; and when he has done it, does he not know, does he not feel, that he could have chosen the other way? If not, why did he balance when he was considering? Did he not know that he had power to act and power to leave it undone? And when it is past recall, is he not conscious that he need not have done it? And does he not say, in his remorse, "I am sorry that I did it"? I say, therefore, it is a matter of common consciousness to all mankind, that they act uncoërced, and with the power of acting otherwise. Give a child an apple and an orange; after he has eaten the orange, he will wish he had it back again, and he will say, "I wish I had eaten the apple and kept the orange." But why, if he did not feel that at the time he had the power to keep the orange and eat the apple? Yes, men have the power; and the consciousness that they have it will go with them through

eternity. What says God, when he warns the sinner of the consequences of his evil choice? "Lest thou mourn at the last, when thy flesh and thy body are consumed, and say, How have I hated instruction and my heart despised reproof, and have not obeyed the voice of my teacher, nor inclined mine ear to them that instruct me." Incurable regret will arise from the perfect consciousness that when he did evil he might have done right. This is the worm that never dies, the fire that will never be quenched. And because this consciousness is in men, you never can reason them out of a sense of accountability. Many have tried it, but none have for any length of time succeeded; and the reason is plain,—there is nothing which the mind is more conscious of than the fact of its own voluntary action, with the power of acting right or wrong; the mind sees and knows and regrets when it has done wrong. Take away this consciousness, and there is no remorse. You cannot produce remorse as long as a man feels that his act was not his own,—that it was not voluntary, but the effect of compulsion. He may dread the consequences, but you never can make him feel remorse for the act on its own account. This is the reason why men who have reasoned away the existence of God, and argued that to require right volition without a competent cause in mind is to require an effect without a cause, to prove that the soul is nothing but matter, know, as soon as they reflect, that all their reasoning is false. There is a lamp within, which they cannot extinguish; and, after all their metaphysics, they are conscious that they act freely, and that there is a God to whom they are accountable; and, hence it is that when they cross the ocean, and a storm comes on, and they expect to go to the bottom, they begin straightway to pray to God and confess their sins.

The natural impossibility of choosing otherwise than we do choose is contrary, then, not only to the common sense and intuitive perceptions of men, but contrary to their internal consciousness. There is a deep and universal consciousness in all men as to the freedom of choice; and, in denying this, you reverse God's constitution of man. You assume that God gave a deceptive constitution to mind, or a deceptive consciousness. Now, I think that God is as honest in the moral world as he is in the natural world. I believe that in our consciousness he tells the truth; and that the natural constitution and universal feelings and perceptions of men are the voice of God speaking the truth; and if the truth is not here, where may we expect to find it?

It has been insisted by some that in looking for the ground of accountability men never go beyond the fact itself of voluntariness; if the deed, whether good or evil, be voluntary, that satisfies. It does; but it is because all men include, unfailingly, both in their theory and consciousness, the supposition of powers of agency unhindered and uncoerced by any fatal necessity. But, convince them that choice is an effect over which mind has no more control than over the drops of rain, and the common sense of the world would revolt against the accountability of choice merely because it was choice. There is, therefore, a universal practical profession of man's free agency, as including the capacity of choice, uncoerced and free. All men claim a desert of reward for well-doing, and complain of ingratitude and injustice when it is denied. They admit and insist that those who injure them in person, good name, or substance, deserve punishment. They admit that laws and rewards and punishments are necessary to the government of men, and just when administered according to their deeds. Even atheists

and fatalists can rail against superstition and priestcraft. and bigotry and persecution, as deserving execration and punishment; an evidence that when consciousness and common sense prevail, their sceptical theory is a dead letter. A nation of atheists were constrained, in words and deeds, to falsify their philosophy; and in the family and in the government to talk and act as if men were free agents, and accountable for their deeds.

XI. Beside all the preceding, we add that all attempts to govern man, and form his character and elevate his condition, upon any other supposition than his spontaneous agency, pervert his nature, and debase society. Just in proportion as mental culture is superseded by force, he sinks in the scale of being, till he becomes a stupid or a ferocious animal. Treat men as if they were dogs, and soon they will act like dogs. But, the moment you treat them as free moral agents, and responsible for their actions, that moment you begin to elevate them. Treat a child with affection, repose confidence in him, and address his reason,—he feels that he is raised, and he acts accordingly; and just as you depart from this course you become unable to manage your child. He gets out of your hands,—he gets above you; for, as respects his relation to you, he is indomitable. The will of man is stronger than anything in the universe, except the Almighty God; and, if you disregard this truth, you ruin your child.

XII. God requires of his subjects only conformity to himself, to his own moral excellence, but he *admits* of no obligation on himself to work impossibilities; and does he *impose* obligations on his subjects which he himself refuses to assume? He does not regard it as an *excellence in himself* to work impossibilities; does he command it as a *virtue* in his subjects?

He has no *desire* to work impossibilities himself; why should he *desire* it in his creatures? He has never *tried*, and never will *try*, to work an impossibility: and why should he command his creatures *to do* what he himself neither desires nor tries to accomplish? He *cannot* work impossibilities: and how can it be thought that he will *require* of his creatures *that which he himself cannot do*?

The original powers of free agency and accountability bestowed on man, in innocency, decide that power to choose, with a power of choice to the contrary, is an essential constituent of accountability, in all his posterity. There can be no doubt that God is able to make a free agent,—to bring a mind into being which is capable of doing right or wrong, under a perfect law. There are two orders of intellectual beings with which we are acquainted, angels and men. With respect to Adam in innocency, we know, certainly, that God laid the foundation of his accountability in a free agency, which included both the ability of standing and the ability of falling. Before either Adam or the angels acted at all, they had a capacity to respond to the divine requirements; and it was indispensable to their moral action that they should. But, if this was necessary to begin moral accountability, why is it not equally necessary to continue it? Did God give to man more than he needed? Surely not. God has told us what he did. There is no metaphysics about it. He conferred upon him no one item of power which he afterwards took away. The Confession says so; and the perceptions of all mankind, and the analogy of God's government, both in the natural world and moral world, and the intuitive knowledge which we all possess of the connection of cause and effect, and of the foundation of moral obligation, all go to establish and confirm the truth.

My argument is, that free agency and obligation were commenced in the possession of natural ability commensurate with all that God required; and that what was necessary to begin them is equally necessary to continue them, and always will be equally necessary. I know that it is said that the devil has fallen into a state of natural inability. But to this I can't agree. I have no doubt the devil would be glad to think so. It would relieve his deep and insupportable anguish, if he could believe that he had never sinned but once, and that ever since that he has been a poor, helpless creature. No! he has sinned since his fall, and will sin again. He does possess free agency, and he can't run away from it. It is a necessary attribute of his being, and so it is of ours. God will live, and his law will live, and the curses of his law will live; and that is the reason why the punishment of the next world is eternal. Stripes continue to follow upon the footsteps of transgression to all eternity.

I say that there was nothing in the fall to destroy man's free agency. The fall in Adam was occasioned by a single actual sin; but does actual sin destroy free agency? If so, drunkards and all liars will be glad to know it. The more liquor they drink, and the more lies they tell, the less will be their accountability. No, the fall did not destroy free agency or accountability. It did create a powerful bias, so that there was an inevitable certainty that man would go wrong. But it did not destroy his capacity of going right. Look at the consequence that would follow. If sin destroys free agency, then the man who tells the truth is under obligation to speak truth, but he who tells lies is not under obligation. Sinning does not destroy the power of obedience any more in men than it did in Adam. It destroyed it in neither; and, therefore, although man fell, the law marched on unimpaired, un-

changed, and therefore it was that Christ came to save not machines, but perverted free agents.

All such constitutional powers as were requisite or can be conceived necessary for man's accountability do still remain. The natural power of man is a matter of inspection and consciousness. We see it in others; we feel it in ourselves. We have still perception, reason, conscience, association, abstraction, memory. All these were possessed by man when he was constituted a free agent, and they all do now in fact exist. So far as our natural and constitutional powers are concerned, there is no difference betwixt us and Adam. The difference lies in this, that Adam, while in a state of innocency, put forth these powers in a right direction, while we all exert them perversely, although by the spontaneous energy of the mind. Therefore, the fact that man is a free agent is as much a matter of notoriety, and as generally known and understood, as the qualities of the inferior animals; as that a lion is a lion, or a lamb is a lamb. It is just as plain that we have the faculties necessary to free action as that we have five senses. These were all that were ever put into Adam. We have just as many as he had, neither more nor less; and, if you take away any one of them, you do to that extent take away the responsibility of the individual; at least, such is the doctrine in all human courts of justice, though some would persuade us it is otherwise in the righteous court of Heaven.

I have now finished the argument in confirmation of the doctrine of the Confession of Faith, so far as the confirmation is derived from the nature of things.

The interpretation given by Dr. Wilson goes up stream. It is against the whole constitution of the universe. It is contrary to the common sense and intuitive perceptions of

man. There is a deep and a universal consciousness in all men as to the freedom of choice, and in denying this you reverse God's constitution of man. You assume that God gave a deceptive constitution to mind, or a deceptive consciousness. Now, I think that God is as honest in his moral world as he is in the natural world. I believe that in our consciousness he tells the truth; and that the natural constitution, universal feelings and perceptions of men, are the voice of God speaking the truth; and, if the truth is not here, where may we expect to find it?

My next argument is to show that, in view of such reasoning, the whole Church of God has set her seal to this doctrine; and that what has been termed a slander upon her fair fame, so far from being a slander, will turn out to be a glorious truth; and that the demonstration of it will have wiped off from her fame a foul stigma, which was cast upon it by a misinterpretation of her standards.

I affirm, then, in support of my exposition of the Confession, that the received doctrine of the Church, from the primitive age down to this day, is, that man is a free agent, in possession of such natural powers as are adequate to a compliance with every requirement of God.

But Dr. Wilson has said, What are the opinions of these writers to us? What have we to do with them? I answer that the opinions of great and good men in the Church, showing how the Church from generation to generation has understood the Bible, is a light in which both he and I have reason to rejoice. And, if I shall bring the united testimony of the talent, learning and piety, of the Church, in support of my exposition, I am willing to run the risk of going to Synod. I shall, therefore, submit to the Presbytery a series of quotations from the fathers, as I find them collected by

Dr. Scott, in his remarks upon Tomline. I take his quotations as correct, not having the originals in my possession, by which to verify them. I presume Dr. Wilson will admit their authenticity.

It is, however, to be remembered, and noted carefully in reading this testimony of the fathers, that by "*free will*" they mean a will free as opposed to the coërcion of fate; the supposed necessity of a series of natural causes, by which the wills of God and man were controlled. The question whether the will is free in a moral sense, as prone to evil since the fall, or impartial and unbiased, had not then come up in the Church. The moral bias to evil was admitted,—taken for granted,—and not publicly controverted till the time of Pelagius. Their doctrine of free will, therefore, is not the Pelagian or Arminian doctrine, but, the anti-fatalism doctrine of mind free as uncoërced in choice, and with the power always of contrary choice,—that is, the equal power of choosing good or evil, life or death,—and in this view I begin with Justin Martyr, A. D. 140.

But lest any one should imagine that I am asserting that things happen by a necessity of fate, because I have said that things are fore-known, I proceed to refute that opinion also. That punishments and chastisements and good rewards are given according to the worth of the action of every one, having learnt it from the prophets, we declare to be true; since if it were not so, but all things to happen according to FATE, nothing would be in our power; for, if it were decreed by fate that one should be good and another bad, no praise would be due to the former, or blame to the latter. And again, if mankind had not the power by free will to avoid what is disgraceful, and to choose what is good, they would not be responsible for their actions. — p. 13.

Because God from the beginning endowed angels and men with free will, they justly receive punishment of their sins in everlasting fire. For it is the nature of every one who is born to be capable of virtue and vice; for nothing would deserve praise, if it has not the power of turning itself away. — p. 25.

This language of Justin is as plain as it can be. That to free agency and accountability the *natural ability of choice, with power to the contrary*, is indispensable.

TATIAN, A. D. 172. — Free will destroyed us. Being free, we became *slaves*; we were *sold*, because of *sin*. No evil proceeds from God. We have produced wickedness; but those who have produced it have it in their *power again to remove it*. — p. 31 [that is, the natural power of choosing life or death].

IRENÆUS, A. D. 178. — But man being endowed with reason, and in this respect like to God, — being made free in his will, and having power over himself, — is the cause that sometimes he becomes wheat and sometimes chaff. Wherefore he will also be justly condemned; because, being made rational, he lost true reason: and living irrationally, he opposed the justice of God, delivering himself up to every earthly spirit, and serving all lusts. — p. 35.

But if some men were bad by nature (that is, by a natural necessity) and others good, neither the good would deserve praise, for they were created so, nor would the bad deserve blame, being born so. But, since all men are of the same nature, and *able* to lay hold of and do that which is good, and *able* to reject it again and not do it, some justly receive praise, even from men, who act according to good laws, and some much more from God; and obtain deserved testimony of generally choosing and persevering in that which is good; but others are blamed, and receive the deserved reproach of rejecting that which is just and good. And therefore the prophets enjoined men to do justice and perform good works. — p. 42.

CLEMENT OF ALEXANDRIA, A. D. 194. — Neither praise nor dispraise, nor honors nor punishments, would be just, if the soul had not the power of desiring and rejecting, if vice were involuntary. — p. 54.

As, therefore, he is to be commended who uses his power in leading a virtuous life; so much more is he to be venerated and adored who has given us this free and sovereign power, and has permitted us to live, not having allowed what we choose or what we avoid to be subject to a slavish necessity. — p. 54.

TERTULLIAN, A. D. 200. — I find that man was formed by God with free will and with power over himself, observing in him no image or likeness to God more than in this respect; for he was not formed after God, who is uniform in face, bodily lines, &c., which are so various in mankind, but in that substance which he derived from God himself; that is, the soul,

answering to the form of God ; and he was stamped with the freedom of his will.

The law itself, which was then imposed by God, confirmed this condition of man. For a law would not have been imposed on a person who had not in his power the obedience due to the law ; nor, again, would transgression have been threatened with death, if the contempt also of the law were not placed to the account of man's free will.

He who should be found to be good or bad by necessity, and not voluntarily, could not with justice receive the retribution either of good or evil. — p. 64.

This demands no comment.

ORIGEN, A. D. 220. — Whence, consequently, we may understand, that we are not subject to necessity so as to be compelled by all means to do either bad or good things, although it be against our will. For if we be masters of one will, some powers, perhaps, may urge us to sin, and others assist us to safety ; yet we are not compelled by necessity to act either rightly or wrongly.

According to us, there is nothing in any rational creature which is not capable of good as well as evil. There is *no nature that does not admit of good and evil, except that of God, which is the foundation of all good.* — p. 66.

We have frequently shown, in all our disputations, that the nature of rational souls is such as to be capable of good *and* evil. Every one has the power of *choosing good and choosing evil.* — p. 67.

A thing does not happen because it was foreknown ; but it was foreknown because it would happen. This distinction is necessary. For if any one so interprets what was to happen as to make what was foreknown necessary, we do not agree with him ; for we do not say that it was necessary for Judas to be a traitor, although it was foreknown that Judas would be a traitor. For in the prophecies concerning Judas there are complaints and accusations against him, publicly proclaiming the circumstance of his blame ; but he would be free from blame, if he had been a traitor from necessity, and if it had been impossible for him to be like the other apostles. — pp. 80, 81.

CYPRIAN, A. D. 248. — Yet did he not reprove those who left him or threaten them severely, but rather, turning to the apostles, said, “ Will ye also go away ? ” preserving the law, by which man, being left to his own

liberty, and endowed with free will, seeks for himself death or salvation.
— p. 84.

LACTANTIUS, A. D. 306. — That man has a *free will* [that is, able to choose either way] to believe or not to believe, see in Deuteronomy, “I have set before you life and death, blessing and cursing ; therefore choose life, that both thou and thy seed may live.” — p. 88.

EUSEBIUS, A. D. 315. The fault is in him who chooses, and not in God. For God has not made *nature or the substance of the soul bad* ; for he who is good can make nothing but what is good. Everything is good which is according to nature (that is, as God made it). Every rational soul has naturally a good free will formed for the choice of what is good. But when a man acts wrongly, nature is not to be blamed ; for what is wrong takes place not according to nature, but contrary to nature, it being the work of choice, and not of nature. For when a person who had the power of choosing what was good did not choose it, but voluntarily turned away from what is best, pursuing what was worst, what room for escape could be left him, who is become the cause of his own internal disease, having neglected the innate law, as it were, his saviour and physician ? — p. 91.

In all these quotations, I repeat, the words of these fathers must be expounded with regard to the object at which their writings were directed. Let it not be forgotten that the first heresy which vexed the Church after the days of the apostles was the pagan notion of fate, or such a necessary concatenation of cause and effect as was above the will both of gods and men,—the very gods themselves had no power to resist it. The same notion was involved in the heresy of the Gnostics, who held that all sin lay in matter, and that man was a sinner from necessity ; and of the Manicheans, who held that all sin was in the created substance of the mind. Now, in resisting these heretics, these fathers maintained with zeal the doctrine of free will,—meaning thereby, not an unbiased will, but a will free from the necessity of fate ; for the philosophers, and the Gnostics, and the Manicheans, all held the doctrine of man’s natural inability.

The philosophers derived it from fate; the Gnostics, from the corruption of matter; the Manicheans, from the constitution and nature of the soul. This was the first great attack upon the truth on which these venerable men were called to fix their sanctified vision, and it was against these several versions of error that they bore their testimony in favor of free will.

CYRIL OF JERUSALEM, A. D. 348. — The soul has free will: the devil, indeed, may suggest, but he has not also the power to compel contrary to the will. He suggests the thought of fornication, — if you be willing, you accept it; if unwilling, you reject it; for if you committed fornication *by necessity*, why did God prepare a hell? If you acted justly by *nature* [that is, necessity], and not according to your own free choice, why did God prepare unutterable rewards? — p. 103.

HILARY, A. D. 304. — The excuse of a certain natural necessity in crimes is not to be admitted. For the serpent might have been innocent, who *himself stops his ears that they may be deaf*. — p. 110.

There is not any necessity of sin in the nature of men, but the practice of sin arises from the desires of the will, and the pleasures of vice.

EPIPHANIUS, A. D. 360. — How does he seem to retain the freedom of his will in this world? For to believe, or not to believe, is in our own power. But where it is in our power to believe or not to believe, it is in our power to act rightly or to sin, to do good or to do evil.

BASIL, A. D. 370. — They attribute to the heavenly bodies the causes of those things that depend on every one's choice, — I mean habits of virtue and of vice.

If the origin of virtuous or vicious actions be not in ourselves, but there is an *innate necessity*, there is no need of legislators to prescribe what we are to do, and what we are to avoid; there is no need of judges to honor virtue or punish wickedness. For it is not the injustice of the thief or murderer, who *could not restrain* his hand even if he would, because of the insuperable necessity that urges him to the actions. — p. 116.

GREGORY OF NAZIANZEN, A. D. 370. — The good derived from nature has no claim to acceptance; but that which proceeds from *free will* is deserving of praise. What merit has fire in burning? for the burning comes *by nature* [that is, necessity]. What merit has water in descending? for this it has from the Creator. What merit has snow in being cold? or the sun in shining? for it shines whether it will or not. — p. 124.

GREGORY OF NYSSA. — Let any consider how great the facility to what is bad — gliding into sin spontaneously, without any effort. For that any one should become wicked, depends solely upon choice ; and the will is often sufficient for the completion of wickedness. — p. 127.

AMBROSE, A. D. 374. — We are not constrained to obedience by a servile necessity, but by free will, whether we lean to virtue or to vice.

No one is under obligation to commit a fault, unless he inclines to it from his own will. — p. 131.

JEROME, A. D. 392. — No seed is of itself bad, for God made all things good ; but bad seed has arisen from those who by their own will are bad, which happens from will and not from nature [that is, necessity]. — p. 141.

That we profess free will, and can turn it either to a good or bad purpose, according to our determination, is owing to His grace, who made us after His image and likeness.

We have now come to Augustine. And now it will be necessary to avail myself of the remarks I made on the laws of exposition. I said that it was necessary, in order to a right exposition of any ancient instrument in the Church, to take into view the controversies which prevailed at the time of its composition. We must now apply this especially to Augustine. Down to his time, the free will and natural ability of man were held by the whole Church, against the heretical notions of a blind fate, of material depravity, and of depravity created in the substratum of the soul. The great effort, hitherto, had been to maintain the liberty or uncoerced action of the mind in choice, with the power of contrary choice. But now Pelagius arose, and denied the doctrine of the fall ; and from this time it became necessary, not so much to prove *natural ability*, which Pelagius admitted, as to prove a *moral inability*, which he denied.

The Church had now to enter upon a new controversy, and to fix her eye upon the question, What were the consequences of the fall ? The question of free agency was no longer to be

argued, for that was not now controverted. Both Augustine and Pelagius admitted it. The question which now exists between Dr. Wilson and myself was not at issue between them. The question, indeed, turned on the same words, namely, free will,—but it did not mean the same thing. The question between them was, Is the will unbiased? — is it in equilibrium? It was not, whether it was free from the necessity of fate, or the coercion of matter, or of created depravity,—but the question was, Has the fall given it a bias? has it struck it out of equilibrium, and struck the balance wrong? Pelagius said, No. Augustine said, Yes; and while, in opposition to Pelagius, he denied *free will* [meaning unbiased will], he was as strong in favor of free will in the other sense as any of the fathers before him; as strong as I am; — so that, if I am a Pelagian, Augustine was a Pelagian, although his whole strength was exerted against Pelagius. If what I teach is Pelagianism, then Augustine, and Calvin, and Luther, and all the best writers of the Church in this age, have been Pelagians, except the few who deny natural ability.

AUGUSTINE, A. D. 398. — Free will is given to the soul, which they who endeavor to weaken by trifling reasoning are blind to such a degree that they do not even understand that they say those vain and sacrilegious things with their own will. — p. 176.

Which free will, if God had not given, there could be no just sentence of punishment, nor reward for right conduct, nor a divine precept to repent of sins, nor pardon of sins, which God has given us through our Lord Jesus Christ; because he who does not sin with his will does not sin at all. Which sins, as I have said, unless we had free will, would not be sins. Wherefore, if it be evident that there is no sin where there is not free will, I desire to know what harm the soul has done, that it should be punished by God, or repent of sin, or deserve pardon, since it has been guilty of no sin. — p. 214.

That there is free will, and that from thence every one sins if he wills, and that he does not sin if he does not will, I prove not only in the divine

Scriptures, which you do not understand, but in the words of your own Manes himself : hear, then, concerning free will, first, the Lord himself when he speaks of two trees, which you yourself have mentioned : hear him saying, “ Either make the tree good and his fruit good, or else make the tree corrupt and his fruit corrupt.” When, therefore, he says, “ do this or do that,” he shows power, not nature. For no one, except God, can make a tree, BUT EVERY ONE HAS IT IN HIS WILL, EITHER TO CHOOSE THOSE THINGS THAT ARE GOOD AND BE A GOOD TREE, OR TO CHOOSE THOSE THINGS THAT ARE BAD AND BE A BAD TREE. — p. 215.

The next authority I shall adduce is that of Luther, who holds that, in the exercise of his own faculties, the mind chooses, by its very constitution, just as much as it thinks by the exertion of its intellect.

There is (he says) no restraint either on the divine or human will. In both cases the will does what it does, whether good or bad, simply, and as at perfect liberty, in the exercise of its own faculty, — so long as the operative grace of God is absent from us, everything we do has in it a mixture of evil ; and, therefore, of necessity, our works avail not to salvation. Here I do not mean a *necessity of compulsion*, but a necessity as to the *certainty of the event*. A man who has not the Spirit of God does evil willingly and spontaneously. He is not violently impelled, against his will, as a thief is to the gallows. — *Milnor*, vol. v. cent. 16, chap. 12, sec. 2.

Thus we see that it was Luther's sentiment, that depravity does not destroy the innate liberty of the will, or its natural power, although it corrupts and perverts its exercise.

I now proceed to quote from Calvin, who holds that necessity is voluntary, — that is, that the will is under no such necessity as destroys its own power of choice ; that there was no other yoke upon man but voluntary servitude ; and I shall show that the doctrine for which I contend is not new divinity, but old Calvinism.

Calvin says : — “ That God is voluntary in his goodness, Satan in his wickedness, and man in his sin.” “ We must,

therefore, observe," he says, "that man, having been corrupted by the fall, sins voluntarily, not with reluctance or constraint; with the strongest propensity of disposition, not with violent coercion; with the bias of his own passions, and not with external compulsion." He quotes Bernard, as agreeing with Augustine, in saying, "Among all the animals, man alone is free; and yet, by the intervention of sin, he suffers a species of violence, but from the will, not from nature; so that he is not thereby deprived of *his innate liberty*." Both Augustine and the Reformers speak, indeed, of the bondage of the will, and of the necessity of sinning, and of the impossibility that a natural man should turn and save himself without grace; but they explain themselves to mean that *certainty of continuance in sin* which arises from a perverted free agency, and not from any natural impossibility. For "this necessity," they say expressly, "is voluntary." "We are oppressed with a yoke, but no other than that of voluntary servitude; therefore, our servitude renders us miserable, and our will renders us inexcusable." — See *Calvin's Instit.* Book II. ch. III. sec. 5.

I always exclude coercion, for we sin voluntarily, or it would not be sin unless it were voluntary. — *Commentary on Rom.* 7.

My next quotation is from Turretin, the apostle of orthodoxy, whose works are the text-book in the Princeton Seminary :

The question is not concerning the power or natural faculty of will, "*a qua est ipsum velle vel nolle*," which may be called, first power and the material principle of moral action; for this always remains in man, and by it he is distinguished from the brutes.

"*Velle vel nolle*" means, in the technics of the day, the power to choose or not to choose in every case; and this he

says always remains in man in every condition, as by it he is distinguished from the brutes.

The natural power of willing, in whatever condition we may be, is never taken away from us, insomuch as by it we are distinguished from the brutes. — p. 999.

Howe is my next witness. He was contemporary with the Assembly of Divines at Westminster. He quotes the following with approbation from Twiss :

The inability to do what is pleasing and acceptable to God is not a natural, but moral inability ; for no faculty of our nature is taken away from us by original sin : as saith Augustine, — It has taken from no man the faculty of discerning truth. The power still remains, by which we can do whatever we choose. We say that the natural power of doing anything according to our will is preserved to all, but no moral power.

Dr. WITHERSPOON. — The sinner will, perhaps, say, But why should the sentence be so severe? The law may be right in itself, but it is hard, or even impossible, for me. I have no strength. I cannot love the Lord with all my heart. I am altogether insufficient for that which is good. O, that you would but consider what sort of inability you were under to keep the commandments of God. Is it natural, or is it moral? Is it really want of ability, or is it only want of will? Is it anything more than the depravity and corruption of your hearts, which is itself criminal, and the source of all actual transgressions? Have you not natural faculties and understanding, will and affections, a wonderful frame of body and a variety of members? What is it that hinders them all from being consecrated to God? Are they not as proper in every respect for his service as for a baser purpose? When you are commanded to love God with all your heart, this surely is not commanding more than you can pay. For, if you give it not to him, you will give it to something else that is far from being so deserving of it. The law, then, is not impossible, in the strict and proper sense, even to you.

He (the convinced sinner) *will see that there is nothing to hinder his compliance with every part of his duty, but an inward aversion to God, which is the very essence of sin.*

Without perplexing ourselves with the meaning of the imputation of

Adam's first sin, this we may be sensible of, that the guilt of all inherent corruption must *be personal, because it is voluntary and consented to*. Of both these things a discovery of the glory of God will powerfully convince the sinner.

Dr. WATTS. — Man has lost not his natural power to obey the law ; he is bound, then, as far as natural powers will reach. I own his faculties are greatly corrupted by vicious inclinations, or sinful propensities, which has been happily called by our divines a moral inability to fulfil the law, rather than a natural impossibility of it.

Dr. SAMUEL SPRING, of Newburyport. — What is moral action ? A moral action is an exercise of the will or heart of man. A moral action is the volition of a moral agent. Nothing is moral which is not voluntary. It is as absurd to talk of sin, separate from moral exercise or volition, as it is to talk of whiteness separate from anything which is white.

Dr. SPRING, of New York. — Seriously considered, it is impossible to sin without acting voluntarily. The divine law requires nothing but voluntary obedience, and forbids nothing but voluntary disobedience. As men cannot sin without acting, nor act without choosing to act, so they must act voluntarily in sinning. — *Spring's Essays*, p. 120.

This nature of sin, as actual and voluntary, he carries out in its application to infants. He says :

Every child of Adam is a sinner [an actual sinner] from the moment he becomes a child of Adam. He sins not in deed nor word, but in thought. The thought of foolishness is sin. * * * Who ever heard or conceived of a living immortal soul without natural faculties and moral dispositions ? Every infant that has attained maturity enough to have a soul has such a soul as this. It is a soul which perceives, reasons, remembers, feels, chooses, and has the faculty of judging of its own moral dispositions. — *Spring on Native Depravity*, pp. 10, 14.

HENRY ON EZEKIEL 18 : 31. — The reason why sinners die is because they will die. They will go down the way that leads to death, and not come up to the terms on which life is offered. Herein sinners are most unreasonable, and act most unaccountably.

Dr. WILSON, of Philadelphia. — No mere man is able, either of himself, or by any grace received in his life, perfectly to keep the commandments of God, &c.

The *ability* which is here denied is evidently of the *moral* kind, because the aid of the inability is supposed to be *grace*, which adds no *new* faculties. The passage taken from the Confession of Faith, chap. XVI., is a representation of the same thing. "This ability to do good works is not at all of themselves, but wholly from the Spirit of God." Here the ability spoken of is that which the saint has, and the sinner has not, and is derived from the Spirit of God; it is, therefore, merely the effect of regenerating grace, which changes the *heart*, removes the *prejudices*, and thus enlightens the *understanding*; the law itself ought to convince such minds of their inability to render an acceptable righteousness, and thus lead them to Christ. In all these instances, the inability consists not in the *natural*, that is, physical defects, either of mind or body; if it were such, it would excuse; but it consists in the party's *aversion to holiness*. This is also clear from another passage cited in the essay, page 15, from the Confession of Faith,—“A natural man, being altogether averse from that which is good, and dead in sin, is not able, by his own strength, to convert himself, or to prepare himself thereto.” Here the words “*dead in sin*” express a higher degree of that “*aversion to good*” which had been predicted of man in his natural and unrenewed state, and suppose the party to have no more disposition to things spiritual and holy than a dead carcass possesses towards objects of sense. The inability or want of strength here mentioned is affirmed of the natural man; and his inability, or that circumstance in which it consists, is pointed out expressly by the intercalary member, “being altogether averse from that which is good, and dead in sin.” Language can scarcely be found more clearly to show that the only culpable *inability* or *want of strength*

in the sinner lies in his *aversion to that which is good*. — pp. 14, 15.

Dr. Dickinson, a cotemporary of Dr. Witherspoon in New Jersey, and a cotemporary also with Dr. Greene in the early part of his life, has this sentiment on the point of discussion: "Let inability be properly denominated, and called obstinacy." This was a divine of admitted and unimpeachable orthodoxy, a man of eminent abilities, a friend to revivals of religion, and one of the pillars of the Presbyterian Church.

President Davis, the pioneer and planter of Presbyterianism in Virginia, afterwards President of Princeton College, one of the most pungent, popular, and successful of preachers, inquires, "What is inability but unwillingness?"

Edwards the younger, President of Union College, was a Presbyterian, and what does he say? To the question, whether the moral inability which his father taught can be removed by the sinner, his answer was: "Yes; and the moment you deny this, you change the whole character of the inability, together with the whole character of the man; for then his inability ceases to be obstinacy, and becomes physical incapacity."

WITSIUS. — He [Adam] sinned with judgment and will, to which faculties liberty, as opposed to compulsion, is so peculiar, nay, essential, that there can be neither judgment nor will unless they be free. — Vol. I. p. 198.

THE ANDOVER DECLARATION, subscribed by the professors. — God's decrees perfectly consist with human liberty, God's universal agency with the agency of man, and man's dependence with his accountability. Man has understanding and corporeal strength to do all that God requires of him; so that nothing but the sinner's aversion to holiness prevents his salvation. — *Laws*, p. 9.

Dr TYLER (see *National Preacher*, vol. II. pp. 161, 163). — Several

doctrines of the Gospel have been regarded by some as presenting insuperable obstacles to their salvation.

The doctrine of *Human Depravity* has been thus regarded. "If I am *entirely depraved*," the sinner sometimes says, "then I am utterly helpless. It is beyond my power to do anything which God requires ; and, consequently, it is totally impossible that I should comply with the terms of salvation revealed in the Gospel." This representation proceeds upon an entire misapprehension as to the nature of depravity. Depravity does not destroy moral agency. It does not so impair the natural faculties of man as to disable him from doing his duty, if he will. It has its seat in the heart, and consists in a perverse and sinful inclination. When we say that man is entirely depraved, we do not mean that he is a poor, unfortunate being, who is commanded to do impossibilities ; but we mean that he is a guilty rebel, who voluntarily refuses to yield allegiance to the God who made him. We mean that he loves sin, and is unwilling to abandon it ; that he hates his duty, and is unwilling to perform it ; that he dislikes the terms of salvation, and is unwilling to comply with them. We do not mean that all the powers and faculties of his soul are so impaired that he *could not* do his duty if he *would* ; but we mean that he *will not* do his duty when he *can*,—*that, in the full possession of all the powers of moral agency, and with perfect ability to comply with the terms of salvation, if he will, he chooses the road that leads to death, and will not come to Christ that he might have life.* This supposes no difficulty in the way of his salvation, except what lies in a perverse and obstinate will.

Again : the doctrine of *Regeneration* is supposed to imply an insuperable obstacle in the way of the sinner's salvation. We often hear the sinner reasoning thus : "If I must be born again, in order to enter into the kingdom of God, —and if this change is exclusively the work of the Holy Spirit, a work which he is under no obligations to perform, and which my own efforts will never accomplish, — then there is a difficulty in the way of my salvation which is beyond my power to remove. It does not depend on my will, but on the will of God, whether I shall be saved." But here again the sinner labors under an entire misapprehension as to the nature of the change in question, and as to the reason why this change is necessary. What is it to be born again ? Simply to be *made willing* to do what God requires. It is thus represented in the Scriptures : *Thy people shall be willing in the day of thy power.* Why is it necessary that men should be born again ? Not because they are *unable* to do their duty, if they will ; but because they are *unwilling* to do it. It is their *depravity*

which renders this supernatural change necessary. But their depravity is not their calamity merely, but their *crime*. It consists, as we have seen, in a perverse inclination, — in a voluntary and obstinate refusal to yield obedience to the reasonable commands of Jehovah. What the sinner needs, therefore, is to have this perverse inclination changed ; that is, to be made *willing* to do what God requires. The necessity of this change, therefore, supposes no obstacle in the way of his salvation, except *his own unwillingness* to do his duty.

Dr. Woods (Letters to Dr. Ware, ch. v. p. 183). — According to our views, there can be no such necessity in the case as implies force or coërcion, or anything contrary to perfect voluntariness.

What, then, is the freedom which belongs to a moral agent? It is freedom from that physical coërcion or force, which either causes actions that are not voluntary, or prevents those which the agent chooses to perform.

I grant that man has a power of choosing between different courses, and of yielding to either of two opposite motives. — *Remarks on Ware*, pp. 34, 35, 36.

Men have by nature the constitution, they have all the faculties, essential to moral agency.

(Third Letter to Dr. Beecher, — Spirit of the Pilgrims, vol. vi. No. 1, pp. 19—22.) — I have just received your sermon on Dependence and Free Agency ; and, according to a suggestion in your letter to me, I shall proceed to remark on some of the topics which it introduces.

Between your views and mine, on the subject of man's *ability* and *inability*, there is not, so far as I can judge, any real disagreement. You do indeed sometimes use language different from that which I am accustomed to use. But, when you come to explain your language, as you do in your second letter, and in your sermon just published, you show that you have a meaning which I can fully adopt. In the first place, you do what many who make much of man's ability neglect to do ; that is, you clearly make the distinction between *natural* ability and inability, and *moral*. *Natural* ability you explain to be “ the intellectual and moral faculties which God has given to men, commensurate with his requirements ; ” — “ the plenary powers of a free agent ; ” — “ such a capacity for obedience as creates perfect obligation to obey.” You say, it is “ what the law means, when it commands us to love God with all our *heart*, and *soul*, and *mind*, and *strength*.” The sinner, according to your representation, is under no *natural impossibility* to obey God ; that is, it is not impossible for him to obey God in the same sense in which it is impossible for him

“to create a world.” To all this I fully subscribe. Here, then, is no room for debate. I have been acquainted with ministers who have differed widely in their language respecting human ability, and who have had much debate on the subject, and have seemed to entertain opposite opinions. But I doubt not they would all coincide with the above statements. They would all admit that man has those intellectual and moral faculties which constitute him a moral agent, justly accountable for his actions, and under perfect obligation to obey the divine law. But all would not judge it best to give to these faculties the name of *ability*, or even of *natural ability*. In regard to the words by which the sentiment held by them all may most properly be expressed, there would be a difference. And would not this be the only difference? And would not any dispute on the subject be *logomachy*? Suppose a minister of Christ does not like the expression, that sinners have a *natural ability* to obey the divine law. But he admits that they have those faculties of mind which constitute them moral and accountable beings, put them under a perfect obligation to obey, and bring on them a just condemnation for disobedience. That is, he admits all that you mean by *natural ability*, though he does not use the language. Respecting this you and he may differ. But, the moment you lay aside the word *ability*, and use other words expressing exactly what you mean by this, the difference between you and him is ended. You both believe that sinners have all the powers necessary to moral agents, and that they are under perfect obligation to do what God commands: though you may, perhaps, attach more importance to this view of the subject, and may give it more importance in your preaching, than he thinks proper.

The same as to inability. I find, from your explanations, that you believe the sinner to be the subject of all the inability which I have ever attributed to him. You say that man, in his unrenewed state, is “destitute of holiness and prone to evil;” “that he has an inflexible bias of will to evil;” “a sinfulness of heart and obliquity of will, which overrule and pervert his free agency only to purposes of evil;” that he has “an obstinate will, which as really and certainly demands the interposition of special divine influence as if his inability were natural;” that “*his natural ability never avails, either alone, or by any power of truth, or help of man, to recover him from alienation to obedience;*” that “the special renovating influence of the Spirit is indispensable to his salvation;” “that motives and obligation are by his obstinacy swept away;” and “that it is the work of the Holy Spirit to convince him of sin, to enlighten his mind, to renew his will, and to persuade and enable him to embrace Christ;”

that "the powers requisite to free agency, which still remain in degenerate man, are wholly perverted, and hopeless of recovery without the grace of God ;" "that men, as sinners, are dependent on Christ for a willingness to do anything which will save their souls." You hold it to be "a fact, that mind, once ruined, never recovers itself;" "that the disease rages on, unreclaimed by its own miseries, and only exasperated by rejected remedies;" that "the main-spring of the soul for holy action is gone, and that divine influence is the only substitute."

You not only make these just and moving representations of the state of unregenerate man, but you expressly speak of him as having an inability to obey God. You make the "distinction between the ability of man as a free agent, and his inability as a sinner," and say "it is a distinction singularly plain, obvious to popular apprehension, and sanctioned by the common sense of all men." You fully justify the language of the Bible in ascribing to man "inability to obey the Gospel." You quote the passages which declare that "the carnal mind cannot be subject to the law of God ; that they who are in the flesh cannot please God ;" and you say the inability spoken of means the impossibility of becoming holy by any philosophical culture of the natural powers, or by any possible modification of our depraved nature ; though you very properly take care to guard us against supposing that the inability of sinners implies "an absolute natural impossibility," or has "a passive, material import." You say, also, that "no language is more frequent in the common intercourse of men than the terms *unable*, *cannot* and the like, to express slight or determined and unchanging aversion ; and that the same use of these terms pervades the Bible ;" that "inability, meaning only voluntary aversion, or permanent choice or disinclination, is ascribed to God, to Christ, and to good men, in as strong terms as inability to obey the Gospel is ascribed to sinners."

In regard to the above-cited representations of yours, I see no ground for controversy. I am aware that, in your preaching, you are accustomed to say less frequently than many others that sinners cannot believe and obey. But, even if you should think it best, as some do, to go further, and wholly to avoid expressions of that kind, still, while in other words you attribute to the sinner everything which I and others mean by such expressions, there would be no difference except in words. In the unmeasured abundance of remarks which have lately been made on the subject of ability and inability, it has not been always remembered that the principal, if not the only difference which exists among thinking and candid men, is verbal. *If this should be kept in mind, as it ought to be, and if*

men who are going to dispute would just stop to inquire what they are going to dispute about, it would very much narrow the ground of debate, and diminish, if not remove, the occasions of strife.

Still, I hold the question about the use of particular words to be of no small importance. Words are the usual means of conveying the thoughts of our own minds to the minds of others. If, then, our words are not well chosen, we may fail of communicating what we wish, and may communicate something very different; and so the gift of speech, instead of contributing to useful purposes, may become positively hurtful.

It is not my design to controvert any of the positions which you lay down on the subject of ability and inability. Putting a candid and fair construction on your language, and considering you as agreeing with those excellent authors to whom you refer with approbation, I am satisfied, as I have before said, that there is no material difference between your opinions and mine on this subject. My remarks, therefore, will relate chiefly, if not wholly, to modes of expression; though not so much to any which you employ, as to those employed by others. There is danger, I think, of a wrong impression being made on the minds of men, from the manner in which some preachers speak respecting the sinner's ability. And although there is much in what you have lately given to the public which is well calculated to guard against this danger, I humbly conceive that still greater caution in your manner of treating the subject would do no hurt.

DR. BELLAMY. — "The law is exactly upon a level with our natural capacities; it only requires us to love God with all our hearts. Hence, as to natural capacity, all mankind are capable of a perfect conformity to this law; for the law requires of no man any more than to love God with all his heart. The sinning angels have the same natural capacities now as they had before they fell; they have the same faculties, called the understanding and will; they are still the same beings, as to their natural powers. Their temper, indeed, is different, but their capacity is the same; therefore, as to natural capacity, they are as capable of a perfect conformity to the law of their Creator as ever they were. So Adam, after his fall, had the same soul that he had before, as to his natural capacities, though of a very different temper; and therefore, in that respect, was as capable of a perfect conformity to the law as ever. And it is plainly the case, that all mankind, as to their natural capacities, are capable of a perfect conformity to the law, from this, — that when sinners are converted, they have no new natural faculties, though they have a new temper; and when they

come to love God with all their hearts in heaven, still they will have the same hearts, as to their natural faculties, and may in this respect be justly looked upon as the very same beings. When, therefore, men cry out against the holy law of God, which requires us only to love him with all our hearts, and say, "It is not just in God to require more than we can do, and then threaten to damn us for not doing," they ought to stay a while, and consider what they say, and tell what they mean by their *can do*; for it is plain that the law is exactly upon a level with our natural capacities, and that in this respect we are fully capable of a perfect conformity thereto. And it will be impossible for us to excuse ourselves by an inability arising from any other quarter." "And finally, this want of a good temper, *this voluntary and stubborn aversion to God, and love to themselves, the world and sin, is all that renders the immediate influences of the Holy Spirit so absolutely necessary, or, indeed, at all needful, to recover and bring them to love God with all their hearts.*"—*True Religion Delineated*, Disc. I. sec. 3.

DR. SAMUEL HOPKINS. — "It has been thought and urged by many that fallen man cannot be wholly blamable for his moral depravity, because he has lost his power to do that which is good, and is wholly unable to change and renew his depraved heart. But what has been before observed must be here kept in mind, — that man has not lost any of his natural powers of understanding and will, &c., by becoming sinful. He has lost his inclination, or is wholly without any inclination to serve and obey his Maker, and entirely opposed to it. In this his sinfulness consists; and in this lies his blame and guilt, and in nothing else; and the stronger and more fixed the opposition to the law of God is, and the further he is from any inclination to obey, the more blamable and inexcusable he is. Nothing but the opposition of the heart, or will of man, to coming to Christ, is, or can be, in the way of his coming. So long as this continues, and his heart is wholly opposed to Christ, he cannot come to him; it is impossible, and will continue so, until his unwillingness, his opposition to coming to Christ, be removed by a change and renovation of his heart by divine grace, and be made *willing* in the day of God's power." "Nothing is necessary but the renovation of the *will*, in order to set everything right in the human soul." — *System of Divinity*, Part I. ch. 8, and Part II. ch. 4.

DR. SMALLEY. — "The whole Bible evidently goes upon the supposition that man is a free agent; and so do all mankind in their treatment of one another." "It is certain that no natural men, except idiots, or such as are quite delirious, are totally incapable of good works for want of understand

ing.” “The power of will is not the deficiency in natural men.” “Were men destitute of understanding to know what is right, or destitute of power to choose according to their own disposition, or destitute of members to act according to their own choice, they would so far not be proper subjects of commands, and no blame would lie upon them for not obeying. But no such powers of moral agency are the things wanting in natural men. They have hands and heads sufficiently good, and a sufficient power to will whatever is agreeable to them. All they want is a good heart. Their inability is therefore their sin, and not their excuse.” — *Sermons*, 10, 16.

DR. STEPHEN WEST. — It therefore appeareth that all those voluntary exercises and affections which are required of us in the divine law may be said to be *in our power*. There is no opposition to any obedience which is claimed by the divine law, except it be in our wills. — *On Moral Agency*, Part I. sec. 2.

DR. NATHAN STRONG. — Here the proud heart objects. Can this be cause of rejoicing, that I am in the hand of a most absolute sovereign? Is this consistent with my dignity as a rational creature and a free agent? Truly it is. If thy reason be exercised right, all its dictates will be in conformity to the sovereign counsel and acting of God. If thy heart be opposed to infinite reason, or prejudices thy reason, it is the depravity of thy heart, and not the sovereignty of God, which degrades, and takes dignity away from thee. Neither is thy dignity as a free agent lessened. Art thou not as free in sinning as the holy angels and holy men are in loving and obeying God? Is not sin thy choice? Dost thou not sin because thou lovest sin? The sovereignty of God will never destroy thy freedom as a rational agent, but an evil use of this freedom hath made thee base, and without repentance will be the means of thy misery forever. — *Sermons*, vol. I. ser. 4.

DR. DWIGHT. — “The nature of this inability to obey the law of God is, in my own view, completely indicated by the word *indisposition*, or the word *disinclination*.” “The real and only reason why we do not perform this obedience [perfect obedience to the law of God] is, that we do not possess such a disposition as that of angels. Our natural powers are plainly sufficient: our inclination only defective.” “There is no more difficulty in obeying God than in doing anything else to which our inclination is opposed with equal strength and obstinacy.” “Indisposition to come to Christ is the true and the only difficulty which lies in our way. Those who *cannot* come, therefore, are those, and those only, who *will* not. The words *can* and *cannot* are used in the Scriptures, just as they are used

in the common intercourse of mankind, to express *willingness* or *unwillingness*." "From these observations it is evident that the disobedience of mankind is their own fault." And "the degree of our inability to obey the divine law does in no case lessen our guilt." And "these observations teach us the propriety of urging sinners to immediate repentance." — *Theology*, Sermon 133.

The Assembly's narrative for 1819 declares that the destruction of the finally impenitent is charged "wholly upon their own unwillingness to accept of the merciful provision made in the Gospel."

REV. JOHN MATTHEWS, D.D., Theological Professor of South Hanover Seminary (commended by Dr. Wilson as correct). Our case, though in some respects it bears a striking resemblance to those who sleep in the grave, yet in others is widely different. They make no opposition to the active pursuits of life. Nor does any blame attach to them on account of their insensibility. Not so, however, with us. We have eyes, but we see not ; ears, but we hear not ; we have, indeed, all the intellectual faculties and moral powers which belong to rational beings ; but they are *devoted* to the world, they are *employed* against God and his government. Instead of love, the heart is influenced by enmity against God. Instead of repentance, there is hardness of heart. Instead of faith, by which the Saviour is *received*, there is unbelief, by which, with all his blessings, he is *rejected*. We possess, indeed, all the natural faculties which God demands in his service ; but we are without the moral power. We have not the disposition, the desire, to employ them in his service. This want of disposition, instead of furnishing the shadow of excuse for our unbelief and impenitence, is the very essence of sin, the demonstration of our guilt. Here, then, is work for Omnipotence itself. Here is not only insensibility to be quickened, but here is opposition, here is enmity, to be destroyed. The art and maxims of men may change, in some degree, the outward appearances, but they never can reach the seat of the disease. There it will remain, and there it will operate, after all that created wisdom and power can do. That power which can start the pulse of spiritual life within us must reach and control the very origin of thought, must change our very motives. Our case would be hopeless, if our restoration depended on the skill and efforts of created agents.

I now beg leave to adduce the testimony of Dr. Wilson himself. This passage from Dr. Matthews goes the whole length of all that I hold in respect to natural ability. If this is not heresy, it is all I mean, and all I teach, or ever did teach. If Dr. Wilson is not opposed to this, then he has misunderstood me, and he and I think alike. If he agrees to this, then he and I do agree; for I challenge man or angel to find anything like a discrepancy, and I challenge him to find any. That he does agree to this is manifest, and two things which are equal to the same are equal to each other. In the notes he says:

Thus, it is evident, that without conference or correspondence, or even personal acquaintance, there are ministers in the Presbyterian Church who can and do speak the same things, who can and do speak the language of the true Reformers in all ages. May the Lord increase their number, and bind up the breach of his people!

My argument is this:—The fact that these writers held the opinions which they have here declared I do not bring as proof absolute that the Confession of Faith teaches as they held; but that it is altogether probable that the framers of that instrument, belonging to this class of men, and standing in the same rank with them, did not teach doctrines in direct contradiction to this. I have brought down these testimonies to the present time, because these expositions throw light upon the pages of the Confession, by showing the impression which it made on these writers, and the sense in which they received it. It would be one of the strongest anomalies in the whole history of the human mind, that men who knew all about the controversy of Augustine and Pelagius, as well as the controversy which preceded, should, when they sat down to make a Confession of Faith, go directly against the whole stream of the faith of the Church.

Such is the testimony of the Christian fathers, and the received doctrine of the Orthodox Church, from the beginning to this day. I now add :

THAT THE BIBLE TEACHES THE FREE AGENCY AND NATURAL ABILITY OF MAN TO OBEY OR DISOBEY, UNCOËRCED BY ANY NATURAL NECESSITY OR HINDRANCE, AS HIS QUALIFICATION FOR MORAL GOVERNMENT, AND THE FOUNDATION OF HIS OBLIGATION AND ACCOUNTABILITY.

1. That the Bible has been understood to teach this by the universal Orthodox Church, is a strong presumptive argument that the Bible does teach it.

It was made to be understood by fallen man, and by common uneducated minds, in respect to its most vital doctrines ; and there is no doctrine more immediately fundamental than that of free agency as the ground of obligation and accountability. Now, the impression which the Bible makes on common minds, who, unsophisticated by theory, read and receive its impression, is, that there remains to man, in the estimation of Heaven, the capacity of choosing whom he will serve, God or the world, and of choosing life or death ; and that his obligation to choose the good and refuse the evil originates in their constitutional power of choice, with power of contrary choice. This is the popular feeling and belief of those who read the Bible.

But, if the uninstructed may be supposed to mistake, it was certainly intended to be intelligible to the most talented, learned, and holy men, who make the study and translation and exposition of it their professional and habitual employment.

But, unanswerably, the Bible has been understood to teach the doctrine of man's free agency and natural ability, in the manner I have above explained, by the ablest, holiest, and most learned men. These, interpreting the Bible in accord-

ance with the laws of language and the best operations of sanctified intellect, have understood it to teach the natural ability of man as the foundation of obligation, and the moral inability of man as consisting in a perverse will. If this decision of so many men of talented mind, and learning, and labor, is false, all attempts to expound the Bible are vain,—the Bible is yet a sealed book,—and all the promises of wisdom to those who ask, and of guidance in judgment to the meek, have, unanswered, been scattered to the wind.

2. The implications of the Bible teach the free agency of man as including a natural ability to obey, as the qualification for moral government, and the foundation of accountability.

The directory precepts, the commands and prohibitions, the rewards and punishments, the exhortations, warnings, entreaties and expostulations, of the Bible, teach this; the oath of God's preference that fallen man should obey rather than disobey, and the regrets and the wonder of heaven at his obstinacy and unbelief, teach the same; and the punishment, executed not only for what he did do that was wrong, but because in place of this he did not do what was right,—because he did not *turn*, did not repent, did not believe,—all imply ability. That such implications are multiplied throughout the Bible, will not be denied; that they do strongly imply capacity of right or of wrong choice, and are based on that supposition, is equally plain. But what would be thought of a human government that should address such language to stocks and stones, or to animals, or to machines moved by steam or water power? And why should they be addressed to man, if he has no more power to obey than these?

If obedience to commands, exhortations and entreaties, is prevented by a constitutional *necessity*, a natural impossi-

bility of choosing right, and the disobedient choice is also the unavoidable, coerced result of a constitutional necessity, over which the will has no power, but of which it is the unavoidable effect, then choice is as much the effect of a natural *cause* as any other natural effect; and directory precepts, and rewards and penalties, and exhortations and entreaties, are as irrelevant and superfluous as if they were addressed to our appetites, or applied to secure the beating of the heart, or the circulation of the blood.

If a created constitution secures the volition, whatever it may be, what need of another apparatus to produce it? Is not one cause sufficient? and, if it were not, why add an apparatus which is totally irrelevant and powerless? The adoption of *law* and motive, then, as the means of moral government, implies irresistibly that God's unerring wisdom has not intrusted the will of men, like instinctive actions, to the guardianship of *natural causes*; and has committed it to the guidance and guardianship of law, and reward and punishment, with such capacity that choice in accordance with requirement is possible and reasonable; and contrary choice possible also, and inexcusable, and justly punishable. On this argument, we observe:

That these implications of the Bible do clearly, and in the strongest possible manner, treat the doctrine of man's free agency and natural ability to obey or disobey the Gospel as the foundation of his obligation. Implication is the most uniform and established mode of scriptural teaching, in respect to natural, mental, and moral philosophy. It teaches almost nothing by formal definitions, and regular propositions, and proofs; but assumes and takes for granted whatever truths of this kind it has occasion to recognize. But the assumptions of an inspired unerring book,—the assumptions of Him

who created and organized the world, and forms and governs the mind,—are the most powerful, unequivocal, infallible mode of teaching. In demonstration men may err, and come out with false conclusions; but God, in his assumptions, cannot err. The Bible, therefore, teaches in the most direct and forcible manner the free agency and natural ability of men, as qualified subjects of moral government. The supposition that these assumptions of the Bible are not true, and that man, after all, is not able to modify and diversify his choice indefinitely, but chooses sin or holiness by a coercive necessity,—that he cannot but sin when he does sin, more than rivers of muddy water can purify themselves, and stop flowing,—and cannot turn and prefer the Creator to the creature, more than the prone waters can roll back their tide to their fountains,—destroys the credibility of the Bible as an inspired book.

Hitherto, all the assumptions of the Bible have been marked with a uniform and wonderful exactness.

Its astronomical, geographical, historical, chronological, and all other implications, are always verified in the results of the strictest examination.

And it is necessary to the credibility of the Bible that it should be so. If it spoke of the visible heavens in a manner different from their appearance to the eye,—and if its geography, and chronology, and natural history, were at every step falsified by scientific investigations,—if the lion and the ostrich and the war-horse of the Bible were verified by no correspondences in nature, and all its assumption of countries and scenery and natural productions were contradicted by the condition of the countries alluded to,—it would disprove the credibility of the Bible, as an inspired book. Infidels, aware of this fact, have made ceaseless efforts to catch the Bible tripping somewhere in the field of natural science, and

have exulted exceedingly when they supposed they had detected a few mistakes of this description. But no sooner did the lamp of true philosophy follow the footsteps of their presumptuous ignorance, than it dissipated their premature rejoicing, by discovering the exact verity of the Bible in all its assumptions of the attributes and laws of nature.

But what would be said, if, in tracing the implications of the Bible in respect to the qualifications of mind for accountable agency and government by law, we should find them all contradicted? What if, while natural philosophy verified, mental and moral philosophy contradicted, the fundamental principles it takes for granted; the Bible assuming everywhere that man is free to choose with power of contrary choice, when, in fact, as the truth is developed, it appears that he is no more able, as a free agent, to choose at all, than a spark is to strike itself out without the collision of flint and steel; and no more able to choose otherwise than he does choose, than water is to be fire, or fire water?

Christianity could not stand before such contradictions of revelation by science. It would open upon us the flood-gates of an all-pervading, irresistible infidelity. Nay, it would not stop at infidelity, — it would undermine all confidence in consciousness or argument, and terminate in universal scepticism.

Our argument against transubstantiation is, that our senses are a correct revelation of the reality and attributes of external things; that no written revelation from Heaven can contradict the testimony of this constitutional revelation by the senses concerning attributes of external objects, without supposing the conflict of contrary revelations, which would not only destroy the credibility of the Bible, but vacate all confidence in the testimony of the senses.

These implications are corroborated by the analogy of

cause and effect through all the works of God ; by the common sense and universal consciousness of men ; by all the results of mental analysis, uniting philosophers in the definition of free agency ; and by the concession of individuals and the public sentiment of the world, as disclosed in moral government as the means of elevating society. But, if these implications of the Bible of a free agency and natural ability to obey, commensurate with law thus corroborated, are not true, it brings on the Bible overwhelming evidence of incorrect teaching ; and if, on this tremendous subject, all its implications are false, the Bible fails to sustain its claims, and the whole system of revelation and its doctrines goes out in darkness.

3. The Bible does in no way contradict its own implications, by teaching the natural inability of man to render to God a holy and spiritual obedience.

It applies to fallen man, in respect to spiritual obedience, the terms *cannot*, *unable*, &c. This is not denied ; it is admitted—it is insisted on. But the question is, what does the term *inability* mean, when applied to a free agent and a totally-depraved sinner?—are the terms *cannot*, *unable*, &c., used in the common language of men and in the Bible only in one sense, and that the sense of a natural impossibility? If so, the question is settled, and we are at fault. But if there are two senses in which these terms are used in common and in scriptural language, one of which means a natural impossibility, and the other respects an event possible in respect to the capacity of the agent, but prevented by a perverse choice,—then, to deny this distinction, and condense both, by an arbitrary assertion, into a natural impossibility, is to beg the question in dispute,—to do violence to the laws of exposition, and substitute assertion for

argument. Yet this, so far as I am apprized, is the course which has been adopted to disprove the natural ability of man to obey. Those passages which mean aversion and obstinacy in sin, and the certainty of his perdition without the special grace of God, are assumed to mean natural impossibility. The terms "cannot and unable," which have no reference to his capacity as a free agent, and respect only and wholly his character and obstinacy as a sinner, are quoted, unexplained and unproved in respect to their assumed meaning; and, merely by the reiteration of unexplained sound, the doctrine of moral inability is attempted to be battered down, and that of a natural inability to be established. But who does not see that I have an equal right to assume the meaning of moral inability as the only meaning of the term, and, by the power of reiterated assertion, to beat down my adversary, as he has to battle me with unexplained words, taken for granted, by force of mere assertion; and that both of us, in doing so, would violate the laws of philology and correct controversy? As soon as the meaning of the texts applied to man and quoted to prove his natural inability are explained, it appears that they respect his character as a sinner, and not his constitution as a free agent, and are nothing to the purpose to prove what they are quoted to prove. If they mean a moral inability, the mere voluntary aversion of a free agent to obey the Gospel, then they do not mean or teach the natural impossibility of believing; and the moral inability of the sinner may be perfectly consistent with the natural ability of the free agent.

With this lamp in our hand, all becomes clear. Whenever the Bible speaks of inability in moral things, it speaks of the sin of the will, its aversion to good. Yet where has Dr. Wilson, in the whole course of his argument in support

of his charges against me, ever once defined the term *cannot*? Where has he recognized this obvious distinction, and the manner of its application? He has insisted on a single meaning of the term, which meaning he assumes, and then denies all right of explanation. As soon as the word is explained, he is gone. These words, like all other words, are to be tried by the principles of exposition, by the established *usus loquendi*, and not by their sound on the tympanum of the ear; or else Jesus Christ might as well have spoken Greek to men who understood nothing but English. Take an illustration on this subject: Suppose an assault was committed; the case is carried into court, where the assault is admitted, and the only question arising is a question of damages. A witness appears and is asked, "Did you see this assault?" "Yes, I saw A strike B." "How hard did he strike him?" "I don't know: I can't exactly tell *how* hard; A was a very nervous man." "O!" cries the lawyer in favor of A, "if he was a very nervous man, he must have been too feeble to hurt him much." Another witness is introduced and asked, "How hard did A strike B?" "I can't exactly tell," he says. "What sort of a man was A?" "O! he was a very stout, brawny man; a very nervous, athletic man." "Then," says the attorney on the other side, "if he was a nervous man, no doubt he must have hurt my client exceedingly, and he is entitled to heavy damages." On this a dispute arises as to the testimony, and it turns on the meaning of the word *nervous*. One of the attorneys brings into court Webster's dictionary, and shows that *nervous* means "of weak nerve, feeble:" and there he stops. Would this settle the question? Would this determine the meaning of the testimony? Just so with the word *inability*. It has two meanings, according

as it is applied. It may either mean a total want of power, or a total want of inclination.

4. The *subject*, and the circumstances of the case, forbid the construction of a natural impossibility, as relating to man in the case of duty; because the subject is admitted to be a free agent, and free agency is known and defined, and by the Confession itself is admitted to be, the capacity of choice, with power of contrary choice. A free agent to whom spiritual obedience is a natural impossibility, is a contradiction. By the laws of exposition, I am entitled to all the collateral evidence which can be thrown upon the meaning of the Confession from the several sources of expository knowledge already enumerated, and which I will not here recapitulate. Dr. Wilson insists that man is able to do nothing; but NOTHING is a slender foundation on which to rest the justice of the Eternal Throne, in condemning men to everlasting punishment, and feeble indeed would be God's gripe upon the conscience. But it will be easy to show that the strongest passages relied on to prove natural inability are forbidden to be interpreted in that sense by the established laws of exposition. For example, it is said, John 6: 44: "No man can come unto me, except the Father which hath sent me draw him." The nature of the inability here declared is indicated by the kind of drawing which is to overcome it. This is taught in the verse immediately following, and elsewhere in the Bible. "It is written in the prophets, and they shall be all taught of God: every man, therefore, that hath *heard* and hath *learned* of the Father cometh unto me." The drawing of the Father, then, without which no man can come, according to prophetic exposition, quoted and sanctioned by our Redeemer, is in being "taught of God," in *hearing* and

learning of the Father; and this is precisely the doctrine of our Confession. "God maketh the reading, but especially the preaching of his Word, an effectual means of convincing and converting sinners." "I drew them with cords of a man, with bands of love." This is the drawing; with the bands of a man, not by the attraction of gravity. Suppose the planets should stop in their course, would God, do you think, attempt to overcome the *vis inertiae* of matter by the "reading and especially the preaching of his Word"? Would he send the ten commandments to start them? or would he draw "them with cords of a man, and with bands of love," to move onward in the orbits? Yet the Confession, and the Catechism, and the Bible, all as certainly teach that the impediment to be overcome is overcome by moral means: by the truth, by the Word of God, by the reading and especially the preaching of his Word, made effectual by the Holy Spirit. It cannot, therefore, be any natural inability; any such inability as renders believing a natural impossibility, which is removed in regeneration. But it is said "the carnal mind is enmity against God," and that this is an involuntary condition of mind. But is it a natural impossibility for any enemy to be reconciled to him? The text does not say that fallen man cannot be reconciled to God; but it says that the carnal mind cannot be subject to the law: "It is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be." Carnality can never be so modified as to become obedience. Again, the "natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God, neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned." Does this mean that an unconverted man can have no just intellectual conceptions of the Gospel, of truth and duty, in order to his obeying it? How, then, can he be any more to blame than the heathen, who have never heard of Christ? And what better

condition are men in, with the Bible which they cannot understand, than the heathen are, with no Bible at all? But if by receiving and knowing be meant a willing reception and an experimental knowledge, which is a common use of the terms, then the text teaches simply that until the heart is changed there can be no experimental religion in the soul; that a holy heart is indispensable, not to intellectual perception, but to spiritual discernment, to Christian experience.

5. The Bible not only does not teach the natural inability of man to obey the Gospel, but it teaches directly the contrary. The moral law itself bounds the requisition of love by the strength of the subject. Thou shalt love the Lord thy God — with what? — with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind; — and with what else? — with all thy STRENGTH. But, if heart and soul and mind and strength constitute no strength, how is he bound by such a command as this? In the same manner, constitutional powers, bearing such a relation to obedience as constitutes obligation, are recognized in the Bible. See Isaiah 5: 1, 2, 3, 4. Was there nothing in the soil and culture of this vineyard which rendered fruit, in respect to the soil, a natural possibility? But the vineyard was the house of Israel, the owner was God, and the fruit demanded was evangelical obedience; and God, the owner, decided that what he had done rendered obedience practicable and punishment just. He calls upon the common sense and common justice of the universe to judge between him and his vineyard. He asks whether he had not done that for his vineyard which laid a just foundation for it to bring forth good instead of wild grapes, and declares that the bringing forth wild grapes was a thing enormous, and goes on to pronounce judgment upon his vineyard.

So in the parable of the talents. The owner committed a

certain portion of his money to every man, according to his *several ability*. These servants, again, represent the Jewish nation. The talents represent Gospel privileges; the improvement to be made believing, and the misimprovement sloth and unbelief. The trust was graduated in proportion to the ability of each man. There was ability, therefore, and the servant who improved his trust received a reward. But the servant who made excuses pleaded his natural inability,—“ I knew that thou wert a hard master, reaping where thou hadst not sown, and gathering where thou hadst not strewed [worse than the task-masters of Egypt], and I was afraid. I dared not undertake to do anything with my talent. I thought it would be safest to hide it, and run no risk.” But his Lord said to him, “ Thou wicked and slothful servant, thou knewest that I was a tyrant, demanding the improvement of gifts not bestowed. How couldst thou suppose, then, that I would not exact the improvement of what was given? Why didst thou not put my money to the exchangers? and then I should have received my own with usury. Do I demand effects without causes? Take him away; thrust him into outer darkness; he has libelled his Maker, he has slandered his God.”

6. The broad principle is laid down in the Bible that ability is the ground and measure of obligation. According to that which a man hath, and not according to that which he hath not; to whom much is given, of him shall much be required, but to whom little is given, of him shall little be required,—is the language of the equitable Ruler of the world. But, if ability is not needful to obligation, why observe this rule? — why not reverse it? Why not require little of him to whom much is given, and much from him to whom little is given? Present this principle to any man but

an idiot, and see what he will say to such a proceeding. There is not a human being whose sense of justice would not revolt from it. And shall man be more just than God? Nor is the principle of graduating responsibility by ability a limited rule of the divine government, applicable only in particular cases; the rule is general, it is universal, it applies to every free agent in the universe.

7. The implications in the Bible of man's ability, as a free agent, to render to God spiritual obedience, are many and irresistible.

Deut. 30 : 15, 19. — See, I have set before thee this day life and good, and death and evil ; in that I command thee to love the Lord thy God. Therefore choose life, that both thou and thy seed may live.

Ps. 81 : 10, 11, 12, 13. — Open thy mouth wide, and I will fill it. But my people would not hearken to my voice. So I gave them up to their own hearts' lusts. O, that my people had hearkened unto me !

Ezekiel 18 : 2. — They said, God punishes us for the sins of our fathers. But God replied (verses 20, 30, 31, 32), The son shall not bear the iniquity of the father. Repent, and turn from all your transgressions and make you a new heart ; for why will ye die, O house of Israel ? For I have no pleasure in the death of him that dieth. Wherefore turn yourselves and live ye.

Luke 13 : 34. — O, Jerusalem, &c. &c., how often would I have gathered thy children together as a hen doth gather her brood under her wings, and ye would not !

Prov. 1 : 24, 25, 29. — Because I have called and ye refused, &c. &c., therefore shall they eat of the fruit of their own way, and be filled with their own devices.

These, and innumerable such implications, indicate God's moral government of mercy over a world of rebel free agents, including precepts and prohibitions, and rewards and punishments, and exhortations and warnings, and entreaties, and even regrets, when incorrigible rebellion renders punishment just and indispensable.

Suppose, then, all those thus addressed had replied : “ We should be glad, O Lord, to love and obey Thee, if we could ; but thou knowest we have lost all power and ability, of every kind, to love and obey.” Would the Searcher of hearts have said to them, “ I know that you can do nothing of that kind yourselves ; but you can pray to me to help you, and you can read your Bible and attend public worship, and commit the Catechism, and lead a moral life ; for as I live, saith the Lord, I have no pleasure in your inability ; therefore repent, and turn from all your transgressions, and make you a new heart, for why will ye die, O house of Israel ” ?

But does God call men to turn, when a natural impossibility lies in the way ? Would he say to them, “ See, I have set before thee this day life and good, and death and evil, in that I command thee this day to love the Lord thy God, to walk in his ways, and to keep his commandments, and his statutes, and his judgments, that thou mayest live and multiply. I call heaven and earth to record this day against you, that I have set before you life and death, blessing and cursing ; therefore choose life, that both thou and thy seed may live ; that thou mayest love the Lord thy God, and that thou mayest obey his voice, and that thou mayest cleave unto him.”

If it be said that men are free to evil and accountable for doing wrong, I answer, if God commanded men to sin, that might suffice ; but, if he commands them to stop sinning, and they have no free agency to do it, and it is a natural impossibility to stop, how does free agency to do what is forbidden create obligation to abstain and do what is commanded, when they have no power ? Besides, could they sin without ability to sin ? How, then, can they obey without ability to obey ? And, if they have free agency to obey, that is just what I am contending for. For they can no more obey without natural

power than they can sin without natural power. If man as a free agent has not natural power to obey, then commands, and exhortations, and entreaties, and expostulations, might as well be addressed to men without the five senses, commanding them, on pain of eternal death, to see, hear, feel, taste and smell. This argument was used by Pelagius and Arminius, and, in the forms they urged it, was easily answered; they brought it forward to prove not only that man is naturally able to obey God, but to prove that he actually does obey the Gospel without special grace,—that his will is under no bias from the fall, and that his moral ability is so unperturbed that it is sufficient, without regeneration, to do all that God has commanded. Augustine maintained that the will was entirely struck out of balance; Pelagius, on the contrary, maintained that it remained in delightful equilibrium, and, consequently, that no grace of God was needed to determine it to a right choice, insisting that dependence on grace to change the will was inconsistent with commands and exhortations, &c. But Augustine, Luther, Calvin, and all the Reformers, fully admit the ability of man as a free agent, and deny that his moral inability and dependency as a sinner supersede obligation, invitation, and command. The natural ability of man is a point which has never been controverted by the Church at large, and generally only by heretics. The orthodox portion of the Church of God never has questioned it, and has denied only moral ability, that is, a right disposition or will, in opposition to the Arminian and Pelagian heresies.

The Scriptures and our Confession both teach, that God is not the author of sin,—that he neither creates it, nor devises plans nor adapts means to break the force of his own laws and administration, so as purposely to prevent obedience

and produce sin, as the natural and necessary result of his own power and agency. You may search the word and works of God with a microscope, and you cannot find any such thing as a plan tending to prevent obedience and to produce sin. You may light up ten thousand suns, and search every cavern and deep recess of nature, and you can find no such thing. In the development of his character, law, gospel and providence, he has produced powerful means of drawing his subjects to obedience, unobstructed by any counteracting influences designed to prevent obedience and produce sin. He has given no law against the moral law, and affords no motive to disobedience, and administers no providence to defeat the administration which corroborates the powers of law. All the tendencies of his government, law, gospel, and providential administration, are self-consistent and in unison. God tempteth not any man, neither can he be tempted of evil. The whole tendency of his government, in the hands of the Mediator, is to lead the ruined rebel to break off his sins by repentance, and not to induce him to persist in them. God is not the author of sin. It wars against the whole moral influence of his glorious character, law, gospel and government. Nor in its existence in fallen man "is violence offered to the will of the creatures, nor is the liberty or contingency of second causes taken away, but rather established."

Of course, I reject all theories of the origin or continuance of evil which make God the author of sin. — The Gnostic, that he placed man in contact with sinful matter, to be unavoidably corrupted; or the Manichean, that it is a part of the created substance of the soul; or that it is a created instinct of our nature, perverting the will by the power of a constitutional necessity; or that all agency in creatures is impossible,

and, therefore, that God creates sinful and holy exercises by a direct efficiency, in such quantities and proportions as please him. I hold, with the Confession, the doctrine of free agency, before and since the fall, sufficient, while upheld, to make holiness obligatory, and account for sin without supposing God to be its author, in a way which would make him contradict himself, and oppose his own laws and government, and do violence to the will of the creatures, and destroy the liberty of choice, determining it to evil by an absolute necessity of nature. To the system of free agency, then, which teaches that to fallen man "no ability of any kind" exists to obey the Gospel, or is required to constitute a perfect obligation to do so, and a just desert of eternal punishment for not obeying, I oppose the testimony of the whole Orthodox Church, and that of the Bible.

Finally. The Confession of Faith teaches plainly and unanswerably the free agency and natural ability of man, as capable of choice, with the power of contrary election.

In confirmation of this position, I refer to the Confession, chap. IX. sec. 1.

God hath endued the will of man with that natural liberty, that it is neither forced, nor by any absolute necessity of nature determined, to good or evil.

Now, if this declaration has respect to man, as a *race*,—if the term man, as here employed, is generic, including Adam and all his posterity,—then the passage quoted settles the question. The whole turns on what is the meaning of the word *man*. Because, if it means man as *fallen*, if it means Adam's posterity, my opponent is gone,—the ground is swept from under him. He must prove that man means Adam, and Adam only, and Adam before the fall, or else the

Confession is against him. Now, what is the subject of the chapter to which this section belongs? It respects free will, — that is, free will in the theological sense of that phrase, as the doctrine was discussed between Augustine and Pelagius, a considerable time since the fall,— and has respect to man in the generic sense. That this is so is plain, from the scriptural references quoted in support of the positions taken. If the declarations of the chapter had respect solely to Adam, the scriptural references would be to Adam; but these references do not refer to him, but do refer to his fallen posterity. They drive the nail and clinch it. See what they are:

But every man is tempted when he is drawn away of his own lust and enticed. — James 1 : 14.

I call heaven and earth to record this day against you, *that* I have set before you life and death, blessing and cursing; therefore choose life, that both thou and thy seed may live.— Deut. 30 : 19.

These are the scriptural proofs selected and adduced by the Assembly of Divines, as exhibiting the Scripture authority on which the declarations in the chapter are made; and what are they? Listen to them:

God hath endued the will of man with that natural liberty, that it is neither forced, nor by any absolute necessity of nature determined, to good or evil. — Confess. of Faith, ix. 1.

If this means Adam, all I say is, that they use very bad grammar, and have made a most wonderful mistake in the references quoted. To say that the will of Adam before the fall is neither forced nor determined by necessity, is nonsense, and makes the second section tautology.

The first, if it refers to Adam in innocency, says he had natural liberty of will, and was not forced or determined by necessity to choose good or evil; and the second section repeats the same thing,—that man, in his state of innocency, had freedom and power to do good or evil.

I take the question as settled, then, that “man” here means man as a *race*, and that “will” here means the will of man as a race; and it is what I hold, and what all the Church hold; and it is the fair meaning of the Confession. What follows in the next section, with respect to man in a state of innocency, is a confirmation and an illustration of the doctrine as thus explained.

Man, in his state of innocency, had freedom and power to will and to do that which is good and well pleasing to God; but yet mutably, so that he might fall from it (Confess. of Faith, ix. 2). That is, his free agency included the natural power of choosing right or of choosing wrong.

Adam had the natural ability to stand; and he had it in a state of balanced power, in which he was capable of choosing right and able to choose wrong.

Then comes section the third, which contains a description of the change induced by the fall; a change which respected the will of man, not his constitutional powers, but their voluntary exercise.

Man, by his fall into a state of sin, hath wholly lost—

Lost! — what? His natural ability to choose right, so that he is now forced and determined by an absolute necessity to do good or evil? Not a word of it. It was not that; it was something else he lost; and thereupon turns the question between us. The Confession proceeds:

lost all ability of will to any spiritual good accompanying salva-

tion ; so, as a natural man, being altogether averse from that good, and dead in sin, is not able, by his own strength, to convert himself, or to prepare himself thereunto.

He lost "all ability of will." Does this mean that, in respect to the power of choice, he fell into a state of natural inability ? Not at all. He had the power of choice as much as ever. But he had lost all moral ability, that is, all inclination to choose what was good. His will was altogether averse from it. He was altogether unwilling. He fell into an inability of will ; that is, into a state of obstinate unwillingness. This is the common use of terms until this day. Moral inability means not impossibility, but it means unwillingness. Man became "dead." But how ? Not by the annihilation of his natural powers, not dead in respect to the natural liberty of his will, but dead in sin ; so as not to be able, by his own strength (of will), to convert himself, or to prepare himself thereunto. I say "Amen !" this is my doctrine. The word "able," and the word "strength," are both employed in a moral sense, and in a moral sense only ; and, thus interpreted, the Confession is perfectly consistent with itself.

The fourth section of this chapter is a corroboration of the same position :

When God converts the sinner, and translates him into the state of grace, he freeth him from his natural bondage under sin, and by his grace alone enables him freely to will and to do that which is spiritually good ; yet so as that, by reason of his remaining corruption, he doth not perfectly nor only will that which is good, but doth also will that which is evil.

Frees him from what ? From his free agency ? from the constitutional powers of his being ? No. Frees him from his bondage under sin ; that is, from his bias to evil, from his

moral inability. And how is he freed? The Confession says it is by *grace*. Wonderful grace it would be to restore his natural powers! One would think this was more like justice than grace. But it is argued that if this bondage means mere obstinacy of will, man would not need divine aid. Indeed, so far is this from being true, that no creature does need divine aid so much as a free agent obstinately bent upon evil. My children were free agents, but they needed aid, to secure the performance of such duties as they were naturally able, but as fallen creatures disinclined, to perform. None possess such a power of resistance as a free agent under moral inability or aversion to good. It is a bias which he himself never does effectually resist. God must deliver him; and everything short of divine aid is short of his necessity. Men are sometimes fully sensible of this. I have heard of a man, under the power of the habit of intemperance, who cried out to his friends, "Help me! help me! wake me up! save me, or I fall!" The love of liquor had not destroyed his natural ability. But he felt that his moral ability — his ability of will to resist temptation — was gone. The distinction is plain and easy; and it is one that we can all understand in the every-day affairs of life. If we see our friends in danger of being overcome by evil habit, we brace them against its power; we perceive their moral inability, and we bring them all the aid in our power. The phrase "to incline and enable" is just as consistent with a moral inability as it is with a natural. Our natural bondage is that into which we are born by nature,—our constitutional bias to evil, called original sin. And it is grace, and grace alone, that enables a man to resist and overcome it. This I believe; this I hold; this I have felt. We shall be inclined to good alone only when we reach the state of glory.

This reasoning is corroborated by the doctrine of the Confession in respect to God's decrees.

God from all eternity did, by the most wise and holy counsel of his own will, freely and unchangeably ordain whatsoever comes to pass ; yet so as thereby neither is God the author of sin, nor is violence offered to the will of the creature, nor is the liberty or contingency of second causes taken away, but rather established.

Here are two points of doctrine laid down. First, that by the decrees of God no violence is done to the will of the creature ; its natural liberty is not invaded or destroyed by sin. It is not in God's decree that it should be forced or divested of its natural power, but the contrary.

There is nothing in God's whole plan that amounts to the destruction of the natural liberty of the will. Now, if I can show that, on the contrary, his decrees confirm it, why, then I carry my exposition. But what says the chapter ?

God from all eternity did freely and unchangeably ordain whatsoever comes to pass.

That God did, in some sense, ordain the fall, and all its connections and consequences, cannot, then, be denied. But how were these ordained ? The Confession tells us how :

It was, "so that no violence is offered to the will of the creature, nor is the liberty or contingency of second causes taken away, but rather established."

Here it is disclosed that the natural liberty of the will is not destroyed by the fall, but rather established ; instead of taking away free agency, and the capacity of choice, God decreed to establish it. Whatever has been the wreck and ruin produced by the fall, the free agency originally conferred upon man has not been removed. Therefore it was that I

pressed this book to my heart, because it assures me that the righteous Governor of the world has done no violence to those powers and faculties of man which are essential to his moral government.

But I am happy, on this subject, in being able to adduce an authority altogether above my own. What did the Assembly of Divines mean by this word *contingency*? The celebrated Dr. Twiss, who was their prolocutor or moderator, must be high authority on that question. He says:

Whereas we see some things come to pass necessarily, some contingently, so God hath ordained *that all things shall come to pass*; but necessary things necessarily, and contingent things contingently, that is, avoidably and with a possibility of not coming to pass. For every university scholar knows this to be the notion of contingency. — *Chr. Spec.*, vol. VII. No. 1, p. 165.

Dr. Twiss is speaking of natural and moral events,— the only events which exist in the universe; and he says that God decreed that all things should come to pass; that natural events should come to pass necessarily; and that moral events, which are acts of will, and which he calls “contingent things,” shall come to pass contingently; which he explains to mean avoidably, and with a natural possibility of not coming to pass. He is speaking of the moral world, and he says that in the natural world all is necessary as opposed to choice, but that in the moral world all is free as opposed to coercion, or natural necessity, or inability of choice; and that every act of will, though certain in respect to the decree, is yet free and uncoerced in respect to the manner of its coming to pass, and as to any natural necessity, always avoidable,— not avoided,—but, according to the very nature of free

agency, always avoidable, in accordance with the language of the Confession, ch. ix. sec. 1 [quoted above].

Now we shall show how God executes his decrees; and what says the Confession on this point? (See ch. v. sec. 2.)

Although, in relation to the foreknowledge and decree of God, the first cause, all things come to pass immutably and infallibly [that is, with entire certainty], yet, by the same providence, he ordereth them to fall out according to the nature of second causes, either necessarily, freely or contingently [that is, the volitions of the mind come to pass freely, and, as opposed to any natural necessity, avoidably].

The account given of the actual effects of the fall is a still further confirmation of our exposition. — Ch. vi. sec. 2.

By this sin they fell from their original righteousness and communion with God, and so became dead in sin, and wholly defiled in all the faculties and parts of soul and body.

Also Shorter Catechism, Ques. and Ans. 17, 18 :

Q. Into what estate did the fall bring mankind ?

A. The fall brought mankind into a state of sin and misery.

Q. Wherein consists the sinfulness of that estate whereinto man fell ?

A. The sinfulness of that estate whereinto man fell consists in the guilt of Adam's first sin, the want of original righteousness, and the corruption of his whole nature, which is commonly called Original Sin, together with all actual transgressions which proceed from it.

If Dr. Wilson's position is true, and man lost the natural power of right choice, this answer should have been changed, and we should have been told that the fall brought mankind into a state of natural impotency. But it says no such thing. It says it brought him into a state of sin. What! Can a man sin without being a free agent? The effects here

stated are the loss of holiness and the corruption of his nature. But surely the corruption of nature is not the annihilation of nature; his nature must still exist, in order to be corrupt. What, then, is its corruption? It is death in sin; not the death of its natural powers. There is no destruction of the agent. But there is a perversion of those powers which do constitute his agency. So much for the testimony of the Confession of Faith.

I said that in expounding a written instrument we are always to consider the attributes of the subject concerning which it speaks; that its language is to be expounded in reference to the nature of the thing. The Confession teaches that man was endowed with a natural liberty of choice, and has suffered no perversion but that which consists in obstinate choice. His natural liberty remains, but in regard to moral liberty—that is, an unbiased will—the balance is wrong.

Such are my views of the natural ability of fallen man, and my evidence that they are just.

It is the ability of an intelligent, accountable agent for the exercise of his own powers under law, and in the view of motives, and with a sense of obligation, and just liability to reward and punishment. Nothing short of this distinguishes man from animals, or dust and ashes. If some such power be not real, no difference can be pointed out between free agency and fatality, and no reason assigned why God should govern man by moral laws, and hold him accountable, rather than any other of the products of his power and natural government. I say, therefore, with Tertullian,

A law would not have been imposed on a person who had not in his power the obedience due to the law; nor again would transgression have been threatened with death, if the contempt also of the law were not placed to the account of man's free will.

He who should be found to be good or bad by necessity, and not voluntarily, could not with justice receive the retribution either of good or evil. — p, 64.

I now proceed to explain the doctrine of Man's Moral Inability, as understood in every age by the Orthodox Church, and as taught in the Confession of Faith and the Bible, and as I hold and teach it.

I am aware that the doctrine of a moral inability, as distinguished from natural impossibility, is regarded by some as a fiction of the imagination, or a mere metaphysical subtilty, of no practical utility ; while all its tendencies are powerfully toward the territories of dangerous error. But when the nature and evidence of moral inability shall have been stated, it will appear, as I hope, to such persons, that they have not, as Edwards says, "well considered the matter;" and that there is a distinction between natural impossibility and a moral inability, palpable and salutary, without denying the dependence of man for effectual calling on the special influence of the Holy Ghost, or implying the doctrine of self-regeneration and salvation without an atonement by the deeds of the law.

By natural inability I understand the fact that an agent, though ever so willing, cannot do his duty, from defect of capacity ; and by moral inability, the fact that his capacity as an agent renders possible and makes obligatory the performance of duty, so that it is prevented only by an existing contrary choice, an obstinate refusal, including in the term not only single consecutive volitions, but that general and abiding decision of the mind for God or against him — which constitutes holy or unholy character, and includes what Edwards denominates "the will and affections of the soul," and Turretin "a habit of corrupt will."

This voluntary hindrance of spiritual obedience is called inability, in accordance, as I shall show, with the uniform use of speech in all the languages of men, applying the terms *cannot*, *unable*, &c., to one who is prevented from doing his duty by the slightest disinclination, up to the most terrible obstinacy of will. In reference to spiritual obedience, it is called inability, also, I have no doubt, from the great and universal difficulty experienced by man in changing from a wrong to a right decision of mind in respect to God and duty, as well as from the absolute certainty that without the Holy Ghost the obstinacy of the human will will produce its deadly results with a certainty equal to the connection between natural causes and their effect, though not in the same manner, or with the same results as to accountability and desert of punishment. It is called in the Creeds of the Reformation, and in our own Confession, inability of will, because spiritual obedience is prevented only by the perverse action of the will; and to indicate that free agency and natural ability never avail in fallen man to overcome the bias of his will to evil, under the combined influence of original and actual sin; that with the ability to choose right, resulting from free agency and creating obligation, he actually chooses wrong, and only wrong, until renewed by the Holy Ghost.

It is called a moral inability also in the language of Turretin.

1. Objectively, because it has respect to moral duties. 2. As to its origin, because it is brought on one's self; which arises from voluntary corruption, voluntarily acquired by the sin of man. 3. As to its character (*formaliter*), because that is voluntary and culpable which is founded in a habit of corrupt will.

By all this I understand Turretin to mean, that the moral inability of man is a reality, is distinct from a natural im-

possibility, and is called moral because it respects the aversion of mind to the performance of spiritual duties, brought upon the race by the voluntary transgression of Adam, and eventuating in a habit of corrupt will. To all of which I subscribe.

It is in this sense that the term moral inability is used by Edwards :

We are said to be naturally unable to do a thing which we cannot do if we will, because what is commonly called nature does not allow of it.

Moral inability is the want of inclination ; or, a contrary inclination.

This impotency of will to good, according to the Bible and our Confession, and the received doctrines of the Church, includes the constitutional bias to actual sin produced in all men by the fall, anterior to intelligent, voluntary action, which, though it destroys not that natural liberty with which God hath endowed the will, nor forces nor determines it by any necessity of nature to the choice of evil instead of good, does, nevertheless, evince that mankind are, as Edwards says, "under the influence of a prevailing, effectual tendency to that sin and wickedness which imply their utter and eternal ruin."

To this bias is added, in fallen adult man, that terrific decision of the mind in favor of the world and against God, which never changes but under the special influence of the Spirit in our effectual calling.

To which may be added the formidable, accumulating influence of habit, which, though it forces not the will, or determines its perverse obstinacy by any necessity of nature, does yet, in accordance with the known laws of perverted mind, powerfully corroborate the perverting influences of both original and actual sin, by impairing the moral sensibilities of

the soul, and the power of motive to good, while it fearfully augments the temptations to evil, and facilitates the liability, and diminishes the resistance to a compliance.

This is the view of the subject which is recognized in our Confession, and taught in the Bible, and held forth in the creeds and standard orthodox works of every age as the received doctrine of the Church.

In my preaching, I have not been accustomed to employ the terms natural and moral inability, because they are the technical terms of theological controversy, around which prejudice has gathered odium and mistake. But in the present case I have no other alternative, because it is on these technical terms that the whole controversy turns.

I say, then, that our Confession, while it teaches unanswerably the free agency and natural ability of man to choose right as well as wrong, teaches with equal clearness his moral inability as consisting in a settled aversion of will to all spiritual obedience, until called efficaciously by the Word and Spirit of God.

1. There is no necessity for interpreting the terms of the Confession, as applied to fallen man, to mean the natural impossibility of obedience.

The various phrases expressing inability are by common use in all languages applied to express whatever is prevented voluntarily, either by slight disinclination, or the most powerful, immutable decision of the mind. We use the terms *cannot*, *unable*, &c., continually to express whatever for the slightest reasons we do not find it convenient or feel inclined to do, and where no natural impossibility exists, or is thought of. As there is, therefore, no necessity to interpret the terms *inability* and *unable*, when applied to fallen man, as teaching the natural impossibility of obedience. so also, from the estab-

lished use of the terms in all languages, there is no authority for doing it.

The decision and permanence of sinful preference affords no evidence of its natural and unavoidable necessity.

Edwards has shown that certainty and uniformity of right or wrong action does not decide the manner of it, as being voluntary or coerced.

He shows, in accordance with our Confession, that God is free in his decrees and their execution, as opposed to the coercion of fate; and that Christ, though his character and life were foretold and certain, and he went as it was written of him, acted nevertheless with entire and uncoerced voluntariness. The same principle holds good in the case of Nebuchadnezzar and Judas, and sinners given up of God. Though their conduct may be certain as a matter of fact, it is not certain by a coerced necessity, but is in the highest sense *free* and accountable; and such throughout are the implications of the Confession and the Bible. Because the moral inability of man, therefore, is as immutable to all motive and human effort as the effects of natural causes, it does not follow that it is made certain and immutable by a natural necessity.

The doctrine of the moral impotency of man is not inconsistent with any of the other doctrines of the Bible.

It is not inconsistent with the doctrine of our entire and absolute dependence for regeneration on the special influence of the Holy Spirit; for, while it includes a natural ability of obedience, as the ground of obligation, it teaches the certainty of its obstinate perversion, creating, in point of fact, a necessity of the Holy Ghost to renew as real and as great as if the impediment were a natural impossibility. It no more implies self-regeneration, than if the work of the Spirit, in subduing the will, consisted in creating new faculties; the influence of

the Spirit to make man willing being just as indispensable to his salvation, as if it were indispensable to make him naturally able. Nor does that ability to obey, whose exercise is prevented by choice, imply that it is an easy matter for man to repent and turn to God, in and of himself; for everything which is possible as a matter of duty is not therefore easy. I agree therefore with Turretin, "that man, laboring under such an inability, is falsely said to be able, if he wishes,"—implying that a sinner's wishes may change a heart fully set on evil. "For though the phrase may to some extent be tolerated, understood concerning the natural power of willing, which, in whatever condition we may be, is never taken away from us, yet it cannot be admitted when we speak of the moral disposition of the will to good, not only to willing, but to willing rightly." For, though in respect to the possibility and corresponding obligation there can be no excuse, nevertheless, in respect to the difficulty, nothing which the mind can lawfully be commanded to do can be more difficult. It is difficult to resist the original bias of the mind to actual sin; difficult to relinquish the chief good located on earth, and set our affections on things above; and difficult to reverse the long-accumulating tendency of the habitual indulgence of our evil way. The Bible, therefore, represents it as, though a reasonable, yet a difficult thing for a lost sinner to save himself; so difficult that none do it, and that God in doing it makes glorious displays both of power and grace, and every sinner and every saint, in working out his salvation, finds the scriptural representation true. The inattentive find it difficult to resolve upon immediate attention, and difficult to fix their attention when they have done it. The stupid find it difficult to awaken themselves to feel and realize anything: and the awakened find it difficult to see and feel their sins, and the great evil of

sin ; and, when convinced of sin, difficult to repent and come to Christ. And when the sinner is converted, it is so difficult to maintain a spiritual frame and holy resolutions, and watchfulness and prayer and perseverance, that, for all that is past, and all that is to come, he says, "By the grace of God, I am what I am."

The terms of the Confession preclude the interpretation of a natural impossibility as their only meaning, and cannot be so interpreted without making the Confession contradict itself.

According to a well-established rule of interpretation, no instrument is to be so explained as to make it contradict itself without necessity, and when it is just as easy to harmonize all its parts by adopting a different interpretation. Now, if I have not proved that the Confession, as I interpret it, is sustained by other collateral arguments, in addition to that which I have drawn from the Bible, then I shall despair of ever successfully expounding a document in the world. I never have seen so much light thrown on any one point of exposition before. Does not the Confession speak of an inability other than a natural one ? Does it not teach expressly "the natural liberty of the will" in fallen man to choose good or evil, uncoerced by fate or necessity ? And, after all, is it a natural liberty that means nothing, and can do nothing ? Does "inability of will" mean a natural impossibility of exercising that "natural liberty of the will" in the choice of good ; and that it is coerced by a natural necessity to the preference of evil ? Does the Confession contradict itself ? We are not at liberty, then, to make it in one set of terms deny an ability which it has asserted in another. And when it declares in appropriate phraseology the natural liberty of the will, it cannot mean to contradict, in its account of moral impotency, what it had before asserted with respect to its abil-

ity to choose, as opposed to fate. I may be able in one sense, and unable in another. The Confession, in fact, interprets itself. (And this, I suppose, is what Dr. Wilson means when he says we must receive the language of the Confession without any explanation.) I agree with him, that on many points it needs no explanation. It guards against its own perversion, and its language is such as I should think it almost impossible to misunderstand.

Let us see what is the language which it holds in chap. VI. sec. 4 :

From this original corruption, whereby we are utterly indisposed, disabled, and made opposite to all good, and wholly inclined to all evil, do proceed all actual transgressions.

Here is active aversion, not fatal necessity. The man is indisposed; he is disabled by being indisposed. But it has been said that if a man needs help it must be a natural inability under which he lies. This I deny. A man who lies under a moral inability needs aid as really as if he were naturally unable; and the aid he needs is such as God alone can bring him. What Christian does not pray that God would help him? But does he mean that he has no strength of any sort? Not at all. He is afraid to trust his own heart. He prays for moral aid, for moral ability, for strength of purpose. Surely, we are all agreed in this. We believe alike, for we pray alike. New School and Old School all confess, when they get before God, their impotency of will to good, and pray for help to will and to do. I have put off my coat,—how shall I put it on? We feel this impotency; and what we feel God sees; and that which he sees he has testified.

Chapter IX. on Free Will:

Man, by his fall into a state of sin, hath wholly lost all ability of will to any spiritual good accompanying salvation ; so as a natural man, being altogether averse from that good, and dead in sin, is not able by his own strength to convert himself, or to prepare himself thereunto.

When it says that man has lost all ability of will, it does not mean that he has lost all free agency. It does not mean, that he is not able as a free agent, and bound to do that which is right, but that he has lost all *will* to do it. My soul ! do I not believe this ? Did I not feel it when God convinced me of sin ? Full well did I feel it. Did I not fall at the footstool and tell the Lord that I was gone, that I was ruined and helpless, and never should come back to him, unless he put forth his hand to deliver me ? If I ever preached any truth to dying men with all my heart and with all my soul, it is the truth of man's total depravity and inability ; that his condition is desperate, and never will he turn and live unless God shall look down from heaven and have mercy upon him. This is my doctrine ; and it is the doctrine of the Confession, which says, we are *averse* from all good. This language suits me. There is no catch in this, no quibble ; I mean what I say ; I fully and heartily believe that man is utterly *averse* to all good ; that he is dead ; dead in law and dead in sin,—under the curse of God, and so will ever remain, until God quickens him by his Spirit and grace.

But let us see what the Confession says in sec. IV. chap. 9 :

When God converts a sinner, and translates him into the state of grace, he freeth him from his natural bondage under sin, and by his grace alone enables him freely to will and to do that which is spiritually good ; yet so as that by reason of his remaining corruption he doth not perfectly nor only will that which is good, but doth also will that which is evil.

“Enable” here does not imply that there is any natural inability. It means, inclines him to will. The Confession is

orthodox ; it says that no mere man is able, without divine aid, to keep God's commandments. That is my faith. I admit, however, that this was the spot at which I once stumbled, when, as I said, I was unable fully to embrace the Confession of Faith. I saw a difficulty here. I believed the Confession to mean just as Dr. Wilson now insists that it does mean ; and in that sense I never could receive it. But on reflection, and with those collateral lights which I have mentioned, I now understand it to speak the very truth, and I embrace it accordingly. I believe in the moral inability which it here declares ; and I believe that moral inability to obey the law perfectly will continue until the Christian reaches his home in heaven.

But now let us hear what the Confession says upon effectual calling. I quote from chap. x. sec. 1 !

All those whom God hath predestinated unto life, and those only, he is pleased, in his appointed and accepted time, effectually to call by his Word and Spirit out of that state of sin and death in which they are by nature, to grace and salvation by Jesus Christ ; enlightening their minds spiritually and savingly to understand the things of God ; taking away their heart of stone, and giving unto them an heart of flesh ; renewing their wills, and by his almighty power determining them to that which is good ; and effectually drawing them to Jesus Christ ; yet so as they come most freely, being made willing by his grace.

This enlightening I hold to be a divine illumination, and such as the Spirit of God alone can give. The phrase "heart of stone," which is employed in one of the texts cited as proof, is a metaphor ; and so is the "heart of flesh ;" and this, I believe, is the only passage in the whole Bible where the term "flesh" is employed to signify anything good. A heart of flesh manifestly means tenderness, susceptibility,—in other words, a willing heart. Renewing the "will," that

is, turning the will into a new direction. It is God who turns it. The sinner left to himself never will turn. But in conversion God does not make a free agent. He turns a free agent. I am perfectly aware that some very good men suppose and assert that the men of the new school (though that, by the by, is one of the most undefined of all designations; the term is like fog,—it has no substance and no definite limits, but floats about in a sort of palpable obscure) hold to self-regeneration, and that the influence of the Holy Spirit is not necessary in turning a sinner from darkness to light. No man ever heard me teach such a doctrine. I have taught directly the reverse, and have put the doctrine of man's absolute dependence into as strong terms as I knew how to employ. If there are any stronger, I shall be glad to get hold of them. All who are in the habit of hearing me know perfectly that the total depravity of man, and his dependence on the power and help of the Spirit of God, has been the great subject of all my preaching; and, as I well know, has been, under God, the power of my preaching. I think, and always have thought, that the display of divine Omnipotence in converting rebel minds is greater by far than any exhibition of it which ever has been made in the material world. And for an obvious reason,—because mind has more power of resistance than matter. Some men seem to think, that if God does a thing by instrumentality, no opportunity is left for God to show his own great power. I think far otherwise. To me the truth seems weak enough in itself to leave ample space for the display of Omnipotence in making it effectual. I think that the act of God in regeneration is the most stupendous manifestation of omnipotent energy that has ever been made by the Almighty. Nor do I ever expect to see anything in God's works that will rival the solemn majesty of that great-

est of all his operations, which, silent as the spheres, moves on in its resistless strength, making the hearts of rebels yield before it.

The next point in the confirmation of my exposition of the doctrine of the Confession, touching the moral impotency of man, is to show that what it affirms on that subject has been the doctrine of the Church of God in all ages. And I shall now attempt to show that the fathers, while they held free will, in opposition to necessity and blind fate, nevertheless taught the moral inability of man, and his dependence on the Holy Spirit, just as I teach it. The first authority I shall produce on this point is that of Clement of Alexandria :

Since some men are without faith, and others contentious, all do not obtain the perfection of good. Nor is it possible to obtain it without our own exertion. The whole, however, does not depend upon our own will ; for instance, our future destiny ; for we are *saved by grace*, — not, indeed, without good works. — *Scott's Tomline*, vol. II. p. 56.

Clement teaches, in this passage, man's natural ability and his moral inability, with equal clearness.

ORIGEN. — The virtue of a rational creature is mixed, arising from his own free will, and the divine power conspiring with him who chooses that which is good. But there is need of our own free will, and of divine coöperation, which does not depend upon our will, not only to become good and virtuous, but also after we become so, that we may persevere in virtue. — p. 82.

I quoted him before, and showed that he was strong on the doctrine of free will, as opposed to fate. What I have now quoted may be considered as a good commentary upon the text, "It is God that worketh in you both to will and to do of his good pleasure."

GREGORY NAZIANZEN. — A right will stands in need of assistance from

God ; or rather the very desire of what is right is something divine, and the gift of the mercy of God. For we have need *both of power over ourselves and of salvation from God*. Therefore, says he, it is not of him that willeth, — that is, not of him *only* that willeth, — nor only of him that runneth, but of God that sheweth mercy. Since the will itself is from God, he with reason attributes everything to God. However much you run, however much you contend, you stand in need of him who gives the crown.

Gregory says that God is the author of faith — that he is the beginning of good in the soul ; yet he is equally explicit on the doctrine of free will as opposed to fatalism. He holds that man has need of all that free agency can do, and all that grace performs beside.

JEROME. — For the freedom of the will is so to be reserved that the grace of the giver may excel in all things, according to the saying of the prophet, Except the Lord build the house, their labor is but lost that build it. Except the Lord keep the city, the watchman waketh but in vain. It is not of him that willeth, nor of him that runneth, but of God that sheweth mercy. — p. 146.

He declares, then, that though man is a free agent, yet regeneration is not the effect alone of his agency, but also of God's free grace ; as the preservation of a city is not the result of the watchman's care alone, but of God's unsleeping providence. Unless the Lord keep the city, the watchman waketh but in vain.

THEODORET. — Neither the grace of the Spirit is sufficient for those who have *unwillingness* ; nor, on the other hand, can willingness, without this grace, collect the riches of virtue. — p. 290.

Here we see, that while the grace of the Spirit does not supersede the necessity of earnest attention and striving on the part of man, yet that no strivings of man will ever issue in a saving result, without Almighty grace. And grace is

not to be expected while a man wilfully indulges in sloth and sleep, and puts forth no effort for his own deliverance.

But, before adducing quotations further, I would remark :

1. That every one of these confessions recognizes the liberty of the will, as free from coërcion.

2. They all uniformly ascribe its perverse action to the effect of the fall, in *biasing*, yet not in coërcing, the will.

3. They all teach expressly that the bondage is the influence of this evil bias, and not a natural necessity of sinning; and, taken together, they make out a clear and consistent account of the natural ability of man as a free agent, and of his *moral inability as a sinner, by reason of the bias of his will, as occasioned by the fall*. If you shut your eyes and try their meaning only by your ear, you will hear it abundantly asserted that man hath no liberty at all to desire good, and can of himself do nothing; but if you compare their own language with itself, you will perceive that they insist on the natural liberty of the will, which means natural ability, and teach only the impotence which results from the will itself, as biased and perverted by the fall, and that the distinction of man's natural ability as a free agent, and his impotency through the perversity of his will, runs through all the creeds, and is as plainly recognized in them as it is in our own Confession. It is this habit of interpreting by sound which demands a running exposition, or I should need to say nothing in exposition of the quotations from the former of the creeds.

HARMONY OF THE PROTESTANT CONFESSIONS.

The doctrines of the early Reformers in Europe were misunderstood by the Catholics, against whom they contended, who maintained that they were all a set of schismatics; that they

were perpetually jangling among each other, so that no two of them could agree; and on this alleged fact they strengthened the great argument of their church as to the necessity of having some head on earth to the visible church, whose decisions might settle controversies, and give uniformity to the faith. To meet this argument and repel it, the Reformers got up this book, which is entitled "The Harmony of the Confessions," the design of which was to show, by collating the Confessions of different evangelical churches, that the representation of their enemies was false, and that in all fundamental points of faith they were fully agreed.

From this book I am about to show what the Protestant churches, just come out of the fiery furnace of papal persecution, held on the subject of the *moral inability of man*. I have already shown what was the opinion of the fathers. I shall now show that of the Reformers. And I begin with the Confession of Helvetia :

CONFESSION OF HELVETIA. — And we take sin to be that natural corruption of man, derived or spread from those our first parents unto us all, through which we, being *drowned in evil concupiscences, and clean turned away all from God, but prone to all evil, full of wickedness*, distrust, contempt, and hatred of God, can do no good to ourselves, — no, not so much as think of any. — p. 58.

Here we see that man's inability does not consist in any want of understanding or conscience, or any other attribute or power of a free agent, but that it is the effect of that which is moral and voluntary; that it arises from the evil concupiscence of a corrupt nature, the wilful unbelief of a wicked heart. Men cannot do what is good. Why? Because they have a moral inability to do it. Who can bring a clean thing out of an unclean? Again :

We are to consider what man was after his fall. His understanding, indeed, was not taken from him ; neither was he deprived of will, and altogether changed into a stone or stock. Nevertheless, these things are so altered in man, that they are not *able* to do now that which they could do before his fall. For his understanding is darkened, and his will, which before was *free*, is now becoming a servile will : for it serveth sin, not *nilling*, but *willing* ; for it is called *a will* and not a nilling. Therefore, as touching evil or sin, man does evil, *not compelled either by God or the devil, but of his own accord* ; and in this respect he hath a most free will. — p. 60.

The fall is here said not to have deprived man of free agency, not to have turned him into a stock or a stone ; but that his free agency, as it did not suffice to keep him from sinning, does not suffice to raise him from the ruins of the fall. Again, let us listen to the same Confession :

The regenerate, in the choice and working of that which is good, do not only work passively, but actively. For they are moved of God, that themselves may do that which they do. And Augustine doth truly allege that saying, that *God is said to be our helper. For no man can be helped, but he that doth somewhat.* The Manichees did bereave man of all action, and made him like a stone and a block. — p. 62. —

Here we find that no man is helped by grace as a mere passive, impotent machine ; that he acts in working out his salvation ; and that God helps him as a free agent, and not as a mass of lead. A piece of lead cannot be helped to rise. It may be lifted ; but it cannot be helped. And for the simple reason, that it hath no agency of its own to be helped.

THE FRENCH CONFESSION. — Also, though he be endued with will, whereby he is moved to this or that, yet insomuch as that is altogether *captivated under sin*, it hath no liberty at all to desire good, as of itself, but such as it hath received by grace and of the gift of God. We believe that all the offspring of Adam is infected with this contagion, which we call *original sin*, that is, a stain spreading itself by propagation, and not by imitation only, as the Pelagians taught, all whose errors we do detest. Neither do

we think it necessary to search how this sin may be derived from one unto another. For it is sufficient that those things which God gave unto Adam were not given to him alone, but to all his posterity ; and therefore, we in his person being deprived of all those good gifts, are fallen into all this misery and curse. — pp. 68, 89.

This Confession begins with the natural liberty of will to choose this way or that, and asserts only its moral impotence, as swayed by this bias of our constitution as affected by the fall.

CONFESSION OF BELGIA. — Therefore whatever things are taught, as touching man's free will [that is, unbiased will], we do worthily reject them, seeing that man is the servant of sin, *neither can he do anything of himself, but as it is given him from heaven* ; for who is so bold as to brag that he is able to perform whatever he listeth, when, as Christ himself saith, "*No man can come unto me except my Father which hath sent me do draw him*" ?

From the context of this verse, and the Catechism, it appears that this drawing is accomplished by divine teaching, the reading and preaching of the Word, made effectual by his Spirit.

THE AUGSBURGH CONFESSION. — And this corruption of man's nature comprehendeth both the defect of original justice, integrity or obedience, and also concupiscence. This defect is horrible blindness and disobedience, that is, to wit, to want that light and knowledge of God, which should have been in our nature, being perfect ; and to want that uprightness, that is, that perpetual obedience, that true, pure, and chief love of God, and those other gifts of perfect nature. — p. 71.

We have seen that Luther, the author of this Confession, teaches the natural ability of man as a free agent, — that all actual sin is voluntary, and every term employed here implies a moral, not a natural defect, the want of holiness, and the power of evil desire.

All these witnesses of the truth hold to the freedom of the *will* as opposed to coërcion or necessity, but deny its right

inclination ; and thus, while they justify God's requirements, they throw the sinner at the feet of sovereign grace. There he lies dead, hopelessly dead,—not in body, not in natural power, but dead in sins, dead morally, dead in hatred to God, dead in unbelief, dead in wilful and obstinate disobedience. And this distinction, once rightly apprehended and firmly fixed in the mind, is equal to twenty thousand candles lighted up and carried through the Bible.

The demand, however, is often made, What difference does it make whether the inability of the sinner is natural or moral, since the certainty of his destruction without the Holy Ghost is just as great in one case as the other ? and of what consequence is an ability never exerted, and a power that is never employed ?

It might as well be said that muscular power unexerted is as if it were not ; that intellect perverted is the same as idiocy, and conscience seared is the same as if none had been given ; that bread rejected to starvation is the same as inevitable famine,—as to say, that the voluntary perversion of all the competent powers of free agency is the same thing as their non-existence.

Does it amount to the same thing, whether a man cannot be temperate, or can be and will not ? cannot be honest, or can be and will not ? A man as a free agent may, indeed, make his own destruction as certain as if he could not help it. But does it make no difference, as to his character and desert, whether he perishes from the natural impossibility of being saved, or from a voluntary obstinacy in rejecting salvation ? And does it amount to the same thing, in respect to the character of God and the equity of his government, whether sinners fall under the operation of its penalties from a natural impossibility of laying hold on

the provision for escaping them by a timely repentance, or by a voluntary obstinacy in despising the riches of his goodness? Provided a man, as a matter of certainty, will die at a given time, does it amount to the same thing whether he was killed unavoidably or committed suicide? was thrust off a precipice against his will, or threw himself off? was poisoned unwittingly, or purposely poisoned himself? was assassinated by the dagger of another, or thrust a dagger into his own bosom?

The difference between ability and inability, in the subject, is the difference between the natural and moral government of God: in one of which his power and wisdom and goodness are displayed in the superintendence of animals and instincts,—in the other, in the administration of law, and the government of the immortal mind,—in which his justice, and the richness of his goodness, and the exceeding greatness of his mercy, are to shine forever. But does it make no difference whether his justice is illustrated in punishing the impotent, or the unwilling? and his mercy in forgiving the non-performance of impossibilities, or the wilful disobedience of reasonable requirements? It makes the difference between fatalism and free agency,—confounding the pretension of the atheist to a temporary animalism, and compelling him to tremble under the responsibilities of an everlasting accountability, guilt and punishment.

It stops the pestilent breath of sceptics and cavillers, by which thousands of youthful minds are perverted, reasoning minds perplexed, pious minds distressed, and dissolute minds comforted with the hope of impunity in sin, because God is just and sin is unavoidable.

It takes away one of the most prevalent temptations to the infidelity and atheism of the present day. In reading the

works of atheists and infidels, and in attending to the objections of perverted minds, the exciting and exasperating cause seems to be, the supposition of accountability, associated with a constitutional, involuntary, unavoidable impotency. It is the belief that the Bible and the Calvinistic Confessions attach accountability and punishment to a natural impotency which provokes and sustains three-fourths of the atheism and infidelity of our nation. They would admit the equity of a government requiring according to what a man hath, but are provoked and enraged at the supposed injustice of punishment unconnected with the possibility of obedience in the subject; and understanding and being assured by masters in Israel that the Bible and our Confession teach this, they turn and rend the Bible. The distinction between natural and moral ability counteracts the Antinomian perversions of the Calvinistic system. Through all periods of the Church since the Reformation, there have been Antinomian Calvinists, and eras of outbrealking Antinomian ultraism; and it has arisen from giving to the decrees of God and their execution the force of irresistible causes, and to man the action of a passive machine; and though in some it has stopped in the frozen regions of intellectual formality and presumptuous reliance on God's efficiency without human instrumentality, in the less intellectual and more heated and fanatical it has degenerated not unfrequently into the most reckless licentiousness. So the same opinions operated among the Jews, as we learn by the terrible interrogations of the prophet,—“Will ye lie, and steal, and commit adultery, and swear falsely, and burn incense unto Baal, and come into this house which is called by my name, and say we are delivered to do all these abominations? We have no power over ourselves. We do but obey the irresistible laws of our nature. We are delivered

by the constitution God has given us, to do all these things.' The only difference between these ancient and modern licentious Antinomians is, that the ancient denied accountability entirely, while the latter attach it to fatality, and bring in the grace of God to deliver from a natural impotency. All these obliquities of abused Calvinism have been pushed out, as I believe, by the system of a supposed fatality of will to evil.

The one is the occasion of great perplexity and suffering to the pious, and not unfrequently to Christian ministers. They submit to it as very right because God does it. But it is a dark and painful subject,—they are embarrassed with it in their preaching, and still more embarrassed in their attempts to meet and answer the objections it creates, and at times are excruciated with its bearings on their common sense and feelings.

These different theories manifest their different results in preaching. The one tends to the earnest inculcation of immediate spiritual obedience, after the example of prophets, apostles, and the whole Bible. The other, to the substitution of unregenerate prayers and strivings, with promises of gracious aid; instead of commanding and entreating all men everywhere to repent and fly to the Saviour, by the wrath of God abiding on them, and the terrors of the Lord coming on them.

The different effects of our Confession, when expounded, as teaching a real free agency or a real fatality, cannot be concealed or denied. By very large portions of the community the construction of natural inability in our Creed is supposed to teach fatality, associated with accountability, environing our Church with the most rancorous hostility and immovable prejudice, and raising up between ourselves and other denomi-

nations an impassable barrier, and giving them motive and opportunity to impede and annoy us. The most successful means employed against our Church, in many places, have been the printing and circulation of our Confession as a text-book for comment. They do, indeed, misunderstand and misinterpret its meaning; but perhaps honestly, inasmuch as they are sustained by the exposition of some of the ministers of our own Church,—and should the highest judicature of our Church pronounce the exposition correct, it would no doubt greatly facilitate their labor.

In addition to the Christian fathers and the Protestant Confessions, on the subject of moral inability, I refer to every one of the authorities I have quoted,—to Luther, Calvin, Turretin, Witherspoon, Edwards, Bellamy, Hopkins, Dwight, Spring (father and son), Wilson of Philadelphia, Woods, Tyler and Dr. Matthews,—as teaching the moral inability of man as consisting in an uncoerced voluntary aversion to spiritual obedience, not merely in consecutive volition, but in a permanent character, which is voluntary and culpable, because, as Turretin says, “founded in a habit of corrupt will.” I close the quotations with Dr. Greene’s account of moral inability. He says :

I conclude the present lecture with a quotation from Dr. Witherspoon, in which my own views of the topic before us are correctly expressed,—“As to the inability of man to recover himself by his own power, though I would never attempt to establish a metaphysical system of NECESSITY, of which infidels avail themselves in opposition to all religion, nor presume to explain the influence of the Creator on the creature, yet nothing is more plain from Scripture, or better supported by daily experience, than that man by nature is, in fact, incapable of recovery, without the power of God specially interposed. I will not call it a necessity arising from the irresistible laws of nature. I see it is not a necessity of the same kind as constraint; but I see it an impossibility such as the sinner never does overcome.” — *Christ. Advocate*, 1831; p. 349.

If there be any doubt of Dr. Witherspoon's and Dr. Greene's meaning, the following exposition of Witherspoon himself may throw some light on the subject.

In this passage Witherspoon, speaking the approved sentiments of Dr. Greene, disclaims the infidel system of natural necessity, asserts an incapacity in man to recover himself to holiness without the power of God,—not, however, arising from the irresistible laws of nature, not a necessity of the same kind as constraint, but such an impossibility as the sinner never does overcome. This is correct, and is a good statement of natural ability and moral inability.

Since mention has been made of perfect conformity to the will of God, or perfect obedience to his law, as the duty of man, which is indeed the foundation of this whole doctrine, I think it necessary to observe, that some deny this to be properly required of man, as his duty in the present fallen state, because he is not able to perform it. But such do not seem to attend either to the meaning of perfect obedience or to the nature or cause of this inability. Perfect obedience is obedience by any creature to the utmost extent of his natural powers. Even in a state of innocence, the holy dispositions of Adam would not have been equal in strength and activity to those of creatures of a higher rank ; but surely to love God, who is infinitely amiable, with all the heart, and above all to consecrate all his powers and faculties, without exception and without intermission, to God's service, must be undeniably the duty of every intelligent creature. And what sort of inability are we under to pay this ? Our natural faculties are surely as fit for the service of God as for any baser purpose ; **THE INABILITY IS ONLY MORAL, AND LIES WHOLLY IN THE AVERSION OF OUR HEARTS FROM SUCH EMPLOYMENT.** Does this, then, take away the guilt ? Must God relax his law because we are not willing to obey it ? Consult even modern philosophers, and such of them as allow there is any such thing as vice will tell you that it lies in evil or misplaced affections. Will, then, that which is ill in itself excuse its fruits from any degree of guilt or blame ? The truth is, notwithstanding the loud charge of licentiousness upon the truth of the Gospel, there is no other system, that ever I perused, which preserves the obligations of the law of God in its strength ; the most part of them, when thoroughly examined, just amount to this, that men are

bound, and that it is RIGHT and MEET and FIT that they should be as good and as holy as they themselves incline. — *Witherspoon*, vol. i. p. 45.

This is all which any one, from Justin Martyr to this day, has taught, concerning man's natural ability, namely, that he is able to obey, in respect to any hindrance arising from the irresistible laws of nature, including necessity of sinning of the same kind as constraint. Yet nothing is better supported from Scripture than that man by nature is in fact incapable of recovery without the power of God specially interposed, though not "an impossibility such as the sinner cannot, but such as he never does overcome;" for, as Howe says, "notwithstanding the soul's capabilities, its moral incapacity — I mean its wicked aversation from God — is such as none but God himself can overcome." Now, if all these writers, including Dr. Greene, "disclaim," as he does, any metaphysical system of necessity of which infidels avail themselves in opposition to all religion,—any necessity of persisting in actual sin, arising from the irresistible laws of nature,—and only insist that by the fall such an *aversation* of man's will from God has been occasioned as constitutes such an impossibility as the sinner never does overcome, I think it must be admitted that the whole Orthodox Church have been and are singularly united in the doctrine of man's natural ability of uncoerced will, and in his moral impotency by reason of a biased and perverted will.

I subjoin a few examples of natural and moral inability, as the terms are familiarly employed in the Bible :

NATURAL INABILITY. — "Thou canst not see my face and live." Moses desired the full-orbed vision of the glory of God; but was answered that it would destroy his life,—his natural powers could not sustain the overpowering manifesta-

tion. David said of his child, after his death, "Can I bring him back again?" and Solomon, "Can a man take fire in his bosom, and his clothes not be burned?" And God demands, "Can any hide himself that I shall not see him?" "The Chaldeans answered, There is not a man upon the earth that can show the king's matter — tell his dream and its interpretation." "They which would pass from hence to you cannot — neither can they pass to us that would come from thence." These are evidently specimens of natural inability, which no willingness or effort on the part of the agent could surmount.

Let us now look at the same terms as implying inability from disinclination or contrary choice,—“aversion of will.”

MORAL INABILITY. —“With God all things are possible;” that is, his natural power is equal to any act which is not in its own nature an impossibility. “God who cannot lie,”—“by two immutable things in which it was impossible for God to lie.” Is God’s omnipotence so limited that for want of power he could not utter falsehood? Is it not the infinite aversion of his holiness which constitutes the inability? “The strength of Israel *will not lie*. Your new moons, and Sabbaths, and calling of assemblies, I CANNOT away with; it is iniquity, even the solemn meeting.” The *cannot* is explained to mean his aversion to hypocrisy in worship; therefore it follows, “when ye make many prayers *I will not hear*.”

It is said of our Saviour, that “he must needs go through Samaria.” Was he compelled to go through Samaria; or did he simply, for sufficient reasons, choose to go that way?

“He could not do mighty works there because of their unbelief.” Did the unbelief of man overpower divine omnipotence, so that Christ had no ability to work miracles; or did it furnish to his divine wisdom such reasons against it as made

him *prefer* not to do it, expressed by the phrase *could not*, that is, chose not to do it?

“Can the children of the bride-chamber fast while the bridegroom is with them?” Doubtless they possess the natural ability. But the meaning is, Will they choose to do it? Can they,—that is, will they?

“Can ye drink of the cup that I drink of?” It was the cup of suffering and of ignominy; and he meant not whether they could feel pain and persecution and shame (for he told them that they should), but whether they were willing, and believed that they should continue willing, to suffer with him.

“Can ye,” that is, are you and shall you be willing?

“If it be possible, let this cup pass from me.” Did our Saviour doubt whether God had the power to deliver him instantly from suffering? He knew he could do it; and only, as man, was not certain whether the agony he had already suffered might suffice, or the expiation demanded more. The phrase, if it be *possible*, means therefore if it be wise and seem good in thy sight,—if thou art satisfied and willing, let this cup pass, &c.; but if otherwise, not my *will*, but thy *will* be done. “Lord, if thou wilt, thou canst make me clean;” that is, thou canst do it, if thou art willing, implying, as in the case before, that he could not cleanse him if unwilling, calling unwillingness inability.

“This is a hard saying; who can hear it?” This means not that a sinner has no power to hear the humbling doctrine of total depravity; but who, as we say, can bear it,—that is, be willing, be pleased with it? From that time many of his disciples went back, and walked no more with him. It was those that could not hear such sayings.

“Ye cannot drink of the cup of the Lord and the cup of devils.” The natural ability of man qualifies him to sit at

either table; but, while he prefers the table of Christ, he cannot — will not — prefer the table of devils.

“The carnal mind is enmity against God, not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be.” If this means a natural inability, how does regeneration help the matter, as it includes the creation of no new natural powers or faculties? But, if it means that the carnal mind is one which, by its friendship for the world, is at enmity with God, then it is plain that the mind which prefers the creature to God cannot at the same time prefer God to the creature, though the hindrance is not natural, but the inability of the will,—a moral inability,—a duty prevented by a contrary choice.

“And Joshua said, Ye cannot serve the Lord, for he is a holy God.” The people understood him to say that they had no moral ability,—no heart to serve him,—because they were so sinful. But they replied, “Nay, but we will serve the Lord,”—we have the ability because we have the will.

“How can ye believe who receive honor one of another, and seek not the honor that cometh from God?” that is, how can you believe who prefer the praise of man more than the praise of God,—who voluntarily set at naught Jesus Christ?

“The natural man cannot know the things of the kingdom of God;” but why can he not,—what hinders?

Answer. —“If our Gospel be hid it is hid to them who are lost, in whom the god of this world hath blinded the hearts of them that believe not.” “No man can come unto me except the Father draw him,” that is, by his hearing and being taught of God; making the reading, and especially the preaching of his Word, the means of his effectual calling by his Spirit.

These examples, to which thousands might be added, decide that the Scriptures of the Old and New Testament, given by

inspiration of God, do maintain the distinction between things whose existence is perverted for want of sufficient capacity in the agent, and things which lie within the limits of his capacity and are only prevented by his choice,—and that both are expressed by the terms *cannot*, *impossible*, *unable*, &c.,—leaving it to the nature and connections of the subject to indicate the peculiar meaning, and never, except in theological controversy, or the cayillings of sinners, leading to any mistake.

I have said that this use of the terms *cannot*, *unable*, &c., to indicate those things which men are able to perform, but do not choose to do, is not a phraseology peculiar to the Bible, but is a mode of speaking into which the universal mind of man, in all nations, ages and languages, has fallen, from the familiarity of the conversational and business dialect, up to the most labored efforts of argument and eloquence.

I ask my neighbor who is on a sick bed, Are you able to walk? and he replies, I am not. When restored to health, I inquire of him, Can you assist me in my business to-day? and he replies, I cannot. I should be glad to oblige you, but my own business compels me to go another way. How often, when a man is provoked at the conduct of his neighbor, do we hear the indignant exclamation,—“It is too bad,—I cannot bear it!” And how common is it to say of a man, strongly prejudiced by interest or passion, he cannot hear, cannot see, cannot understand; and of the miser when the cry of the widow and fatherless assails him, he cannot give. Gold is his god, and his heart is made of stone.

The following examples from Edwards, and Buck, and a few other writers of eminence, will suffice both to illustrate the nature of the distinction between natural and moral ina-

bility, and the *usus loquendi* of theological, political and literary authors :

EDWARDS. — To give some instances of this moral inability : A woman of great honor and chastity may have a moral inability to prostitute herself to her slave. A child of great love and duty may be unable to be willing to kill his father. A drunkard, under such and such circumstances, may be unable to forbear taking of strong drink. A very malicious man may be unable to exert benevolent acts to an enemy, or to desire his prosperity; yea, some may be so under the power of a vile disposition that they may be unable to love those who are most worthy of their esteem and affection. A strong habit of virtue, and a great degree of holiness, may cause a moral inability to love wickedness in general, may render a man unable to take complacency in wicked persons or things, or to choose a wicked life, and prefer it to a virtuous life. And, on the other hand, a great degree of habitual wickedness may lay a man under an inability to love and choose holiness, and render him utterly unable to love an infinitely holy being, or to choose and cleave to him as his chief good.

BUCK.

Natural Inability.

Cain *could not* have killed Abel, if Cain had been the weakest, and Abel aware of him.

Jacob *could not* rejoice in Joseph's exaltation before he heard of it.

The woman mentioned in 2d Kings 6 : 29 *could not* kill her neighbor's son and eat him, when he was hid, and she could not find him.

Hazael *could not* have smothered Benhadad, if he had not been suffered to enter his chamber.

Moral Inability.

Cain *could not* have killed Abel, if Cain feared God, and loved his brother.

Potiphar's wife *could not* rejoice in it, if she continued under it.

Had that woman been a very affectionate mother, she *could not* have killed her own son in a time of plenty, as she did in a time of famine.

If a dutiful, affectionate son had been waiting on Benhadad, in Hazael's stead, he *could not* have smothered him, as Hazael did.

There is hardly an author of repute, from the time of Alfred to the present day, — whether a poet, a historian, an essayist, or a metaphysician, — who does not afford abundant

examples of such use of the word *cannot*. I select a few from known and classical authors :

LORD BACON. — A man's person hath many relations which he *cannot* put off. A man *cannot* speak to his wife but as a husband ; to his son, but as a father ; to his enemy, but upon terms. — p. 186.

Dr. JOHNSON. — In apologizing for the omission of many business terms in his Dictionary, he says :

I *could not* visit caverns to learn the miner's language, nor take a voyage to perfect my skill in the dialect of navigation, nor visit warehouses of merchants and shops of artificers, to gain the names of wares, tools, and operations, of which no mention is made in books.

Again, moral and natural inability are brought together in one sentence :

There never *can* be wanting some who will consider that a whole life *cannot* be spent on syntax and etymology, and that even a whole life *would not* be sufficient.

SHAKSPEARE,—who is as noted for using language as *men* in every situation use it, as he is for delineation of character :

Pray, can I not,

Though inclination be as sharp as 't will,
My stronger guilt defeats my strong intent ;
And, like a man to double business bound,
I stand in pause where I shall first begin,
And both neglect. * * * *

But O, what form of prayer
Can serve my turn? Forgive me my foul murder !
That *cannot* be ; since I am still possessed
Of those effects for which I did the murder,—
My crown, mine own ambition, and my queen.

Hamlet, Act III. Scene 3.

BURKE. — I *cannot* remove the eternal barriers of creation.

This was a physical impossibility. But is the following, occurring just before in the same speech, *physically* impossible?

I *cannot* insult and ridicule the feelings of millions of my fellow-creatures, as Sir Edward Coke insulted one excellent individual (Sir Walter Raleigh) at the bar. — *Speech on Conciliation with America.*

WEBSTER. — This court, then, does not admit the doctrine that a legislature can repeal statutes creating private corporations. If it cannot repeal them altogether, of course it *cannot* repeal any part of them, or impair them, or essentially alter them, without the consent of the corporators.

But if the court had chosen to be unjust, *could they not* do this? Was it physically impossible?

So, in the same speech, he says, in still stronger language, "In the very nature of things, a charter *cannot* be forced upon anybody; no one *can* be compelled to accept a grant."

But is it literally *impossible* for one to be *compelled* by *suitable power*?

So, a few lines after, — "It *cannot* be pretended that the legislature, as successor to the king in this part of his prerogative, has any power to revoke, vacate, or alter this charter." But if one *chose* to pretend this, could he not? — *Webster's Speech in case Dartmouth College v. William H. Woodward.*

ALEXANDER HAMILTON. — It *cannot* be affirmed that a duration of four years, or any other limited duration, would completely answer the end proposed. — *Federalist*, No. 61.

Surely he knew that it *could be* affirmed, if any chose to.

JUDGE STORY. — Had the faculties of man been competent to the framing of a system of government which would leave nothing to implication, it *cannot* be doubted that the effort would have been made by the framers of our constitution. — *Com. on Constitution* (abridged), p. 147.

It certainly could not *reasonably*, but would it be out of the power of *mind* to do so?

But it is said, If men, as free agents, are in reality able to obey the Gospel, how does it happen that under such a pressure of motives no one of the human race should ever have done it? And suppose we could not tell, and should admit that it is wonderful,—as God does,—would it follow that the reason is the natural impossibility of evangelical obedience? How could it be wonderful that men do not of themselves obey the Gospel, if the reason of it is that it is a natural impossibility? Is it wonderful that men do not create worlds, or uphold or govern the universe? and why should the non-performance of one impossibility be more wonderful than another? Can there be no uniformity of character without a coercive necessity producing it? Is not God of one mind, immutable, yet free? Are not the angels free who kept their first estate? And are not the fallen angels, though immutably wicked, as voluntary in their opposition to God as the holy angels are voluntary in their obedience? As to the uniform disobedience of fallen man until renewed by the Holy Ghost, we have only to say it is a matter of fact, well authenticated, that free agents do so; that it is a part of the terrific nature of sinful man to baffle all motives, and be voluntarily but unchangeably wicked, persevering in rebellion, amid commands, prohibitions, promises and threatenings, and the entreaties of the holy universe, and the weepings and wailings of the lost.

The next topic in order is that of ORIGINAL SIN. And, in my belief, there is no subject in theology on which it is more difficult to speak with clearness and accuracy than concerning the effects of the fall on the posterity of Adam, and the condition of the human mind before it arrives at the

point of developing its intellectual and moral powers in actual sin. Nor is it wonderful, because neither intuition nor philosophy, nor personal communion with infant mind, makes us acquainted with its attributes. For this reason, when I have spoken on the subject, I have confined myself uniformly to the facts in the case revealed in the Bible, and discarded pertinaciously all theorizing.

What the precise errors are which I am supposed to hold, I do not know; but, from the evidence relied on, and the general course of the argument, it would seem that I am supposed to hold the Pelagian doctrine on the subject; that I deny that Adam was the federal head and representative of his race; that the covenant was made not only with Adam, but also with his posterity; that the guilt of his sin was imputed to them; that there is any such thing as native depravity; or that infants are depraved. That, on the contrary, I hold and teach, that infants are innocent, and as pure as Adam before the fall; and that each one stands or falls for himself, as he rises to personal accountability; and that there is no such thing as original sin, descending from Adam by ordinary generation; and that original sin is not sin in any sense deserving of God's wrath and curse.

Now, every one of these assumed errors of my faith I deny to be my faith. They ascribe to me opinions which I have never held or taught; and, as I shall show, there is no evidence that I ever taught one of them.

There is no more evidence of my holding or teaching the doctrines of Pelagius on original sin, than there is of my holding the doctrine of Mahomet, or the Brahmins, or the Pope. And, though I doubt not that my direct evidence will be satisfactory, I will not omit that which is collateral and circumstantial. My religious education was superintended by

pious Calvinists of blessed memory; and was as orthodox as the Assembly's Catechism, committed to memory, could make it. My convictions of sin were in accordance with my educational belief, and were deep and distressing, to the cutting off of all self-righteous hope from native excellence, or acceptable obedience in any action, social, civil or religious, and laid me low in an agony of self-despair, at the footstool of mercy, as unholy, totally depraved, justly condemned, and hopeless of regeneration and pardon but through the infinite sovereign mercy of God, through the merits of Christ. And the change which led me to hope, and has sustained me in my ministry, and holds up my hopes of heaven, was, I full well know, "not of blood, nor of the will of man, nor of the will of the flesh, but of God;" so that, if I am a Pelagian now in my faith, few men can be more inexcusable in obliterating the teachings of a pious education, or the teachings of God's holy Spirit in my own distressing experience. But I have not gone back. I remember the horrid pit, and have also in fresh recollection the wormwood and the gall; and it is knowing the terrors of the Lord, and the love of Christ in my deliverance from them, which, if I am not deceived, have sustained and animated me in the work of the ministry. My theological education was under Dwight; and the authors which contributed to form and settle my faith were Edwards, Bellamy, Witherspoon, Dwight, and Fuller. With such favorite authors for my guide, I have perceived in myself no retrocession from my early convictions. The doctrines which have constituted the body and power of my preaching, so far as it has had any, have been,—the doctrine of God's decrees, the fall, the native and total depravity of man, election, effectual calling, or regeneration by the special influence of the Holy Spirit, justification by the merits of Christ through

faith, and the perseverance of the saints ; doctrines not commonly, I believe, found in alliance with Pelagian notions of native excellence and regeneration by moral suasion ; and my preaching, if Pelagians or Unitarians have claimed me, has never seemed to satisfy them, or the results of it to correspond with what they claimed to be the proper fruits of correct preaching ; they have been the results of Calvinistic preaching, in convictions of sin and apparent conversions to God, such as Pelagians ridicule and denounce as fanaticism, instead of the fruits of the Spirit.

I have never been ultra Calvinistic, pushing my opinions towards Antinomian fatality ; nor have I at all more leaned to the doctrine of Pelagian free will and human self-sufficiency ; and in doctrine I am what I ever have been, having gained only the more accurate and comprehensive knowledge which use and study afford, and the facilities of presenting to every man his portion in due season, as the result of experience in the adaptation of particular truths to particular states of mind. All this, however, is nothing against positive evidence of defection. But no such evidence has been produced. The chief evidence relied on is contained in my sermon on the native character of man. But that sermon was not designed to teach, and does not teach professedly, the doctrine of original sin. It has no direct respect to that doctrine. There is not a word in the sermon designed to state, explain, prove, or apply, that doctrine. The subject of the sermon is THE TOTAL DEPRAVITY OF ADULT MAN, and affords not the least evidence of what my opinions are on the subject of original sin. By the laws of interpretation, therefore, you are not permitted to travel out of the record, and apply to infants and original sin the language I have held with express and exclusive reference to the total depravity of adult man.

It was occasioned by local exigency in my congregation,—the restiveness of a man of talents and learning under the preaching of the doctrine of total depravity, especially in its denial of the native virtues and acceptable doings of unregenerate men. It was Pelagianism, in substance, that rose up against me; and the sermon was purposely constructed so as, by explaining and proving the doctrine of total depravity, to put it down. The correctness of this representation will be sustained by an analysis of the sermon.

ANALYSIS OF THE SERMON ON THE NATIVE CHARACTER OF MAN.*

Its title precludes any reference to original sin; it is, *The Native CHARACTER OF MAN*; meaning, of course, not his native constitution, but the *character* which all men first form who come up to personal action. *Native*, as applied to character, is sanctioned by correct theological use, and means the character which all men first sustain, in the exercise of their own powers, under the perverting influence of the fall.

The text has exclusive regard to adults, to regenerated men: “Whosoever loveth is born of God.”

It is regarded in its exposition as holy love,—the fulfilling of the law,—the principle of evangelical obedience,—religion,—does not belong to men by nature,—is never a quality of his heart by natural birth, and is the result of a special divine interposition which makes him a child of God. Both the text and introduction, therefore, respect regeneration in adult man.

It is the object of the sermon to prove that man is not religious by nature,—meaning by man the race; and by “not religious by nature,” that there is nothing in the constitution of adult man of which religion is ever the result,

* *Vide* page 53.

without a change of heart by the special influence of the Holy Ghost. The proof in every particular respects, evidently and only, adult man and actual sin.

Universal experience evinces that the supreme love of the world constitutes the first character of man. All men are conscious that they set their affections first supremely on the world, and not on God. Awakened sinners discover that they have no true love to God, and Christians can look back to the time when evidently they had none.

The history of the world is inconsistent with the supposition of native religion. Its idolatry, its animalism, gluttony, intemperance, and lust,—its wars, frauds, violence, and blood. Love to God and man in the hearts of all by nature could not have made such a history as that of our world has been.

The Bible affords no testimony to the piety of man by nature,—says nothing good of the human heart,—not a syllable.

It ascribes to the heart of man by nature a character inconsistent with religion,—*evil only*, deceitful, fully set on evil, desperately wicked, full of madness.

The scriptural account of childhood shows that man is not born religious. Every imagination of the heart is evil from his youth,—the wicked are estranged from the womb,—no religion born with them.

All the generic descriptions of the race are such as preclude religion as the native character of man.

Man is the generic of the race. But what is man that he should be clean? or the son of man, that he should be righteous?

The world is another generic term, characteristic of the race. But it is a world which hated Christ, and whose friendship is enmity with God.

The flesh is another. But the carnal mind is enmity against God.

The whole world is divided into classes, and all men are described as holy or unholy, righteous or wicked. But never as righteous first, but always as wicked first, and as becoming righteous by the power of the Spirit.

It was while we were enemies that Christ died for us; and it is only by being reconciled that we become religious.

It is the direct testimony of the omniscient God, that all have gone out of the way,—become vile; none that do good,—no, not one.

The alleged universal necessity of a change to qualify men for heaven is proof that they have no religion.

The reversal of this argument shows its force. If the *first accountable character of man is a religious character*, this entire body of evidence must be reversed. All men must be conscious of supreme love to God in early life, and conviction of sin and a moral renovation must be confined to those who have lost their religion, while the great body of Christians must be supposed to be such without the consciousness of any change. At the same time, the history of the world must be found to be a history of the fruits of piety; idolatry itself being only an aberration of religious affection in the fast friends of God, emulous to please their heavenly Father! It should, moreover, be found written upon the unerring page, “Every imagination of man’s heart is *good* from his youth. The children of men have *not* gone out of the way. There is none that *doth not* understand and seek God, and do good; no, not one. The heart of the sons of men is full of *goodness*, out of which proceed *holy* thoughts, benevolent deeds, chastity, truth and reverence for God. What, therefore, is man, that he should be *wicked*? or he that is born of a woman, that he should *not* be religious? How *lovely* and pure is man, who drinketh in *righteousness*

like water ! This is the *approbation*, that *darkness* is come into the world, and men have loved *light* more than darkness because their deeds are *good*. The whole world lieth in *righteousness*. He [Christ] was in the world, and the world *knew* him. O righteous Father, the world hath *known* thee. The friendship of the world is *friendship with God*. If the world hath loved you, ye know that it loved *me* before it loved you. Be ye, therefore, *conformed* to the world, and be ye *not transformed* by any *renewing* of your mind. My spirit shall *always* strive with man, because *he* is spirit. For that which is born of the *flesh* is *spirit*. Marvel not that I say unto you ye *must not* be born again. For the works of the *flesh* are *love, joy, peace, faith* ; and the fruits of the Spirit are love, joy, peace, faith. In me,—that is, in my flesh,—dwelleth *every* good thing. Jesus Christ came to seek and to save those who were *not* lost ; and he died *not* for his enemies,—*not* the just for the unjust, but for his righteous friends. The Gospel demands of men *no new character* ; and all the doctrines of the Bible imply the early and universal piety of the human family.”

All the inferences from the doctrine as thus proved refer to man as an adult subject of the government of God.

1. This discussion discloses the nature of depravity in unrenewed man : it consists in the want of love to God, and loving the creature more than God ; in covetousness, which is idolatry, having other gods before him.

2. The depravity of adult man is voluntary, as opposed to a coërcive necessity of sinful choice.

3. It is positive. Not merely the want of love to God, but actual transgression against God. Active enmity.

4. It is great, as committed against a being of infinite excellence,—a violation of infinite obligation,—against the most

powerful motives in the most aggravating circumstances, and with unparalleled obstinacy of determination.

5. The depravity of man implied in the absence of religion is entire,—fallen adult man is totally depraved.

6. It illustrates the nature and necessity of regeneration, as being the commencement of holy love to God in the soul ; its absence, death in sin ; its presence, by the power of the Spirit, a resurrection from the dead. It is a change perceptible by its effects, and instantaneous in its commencement. There is a moment when he who loved the world more than God gives it up, and gives his heart to God,—a time when the METANOIA comes to pass.

This is my Pelagian sermon. A sermon on total adult depravity, and its nature as voluntary, consisting in enmity to God, selfishness, pride, covetousness, idolatry, impenitence, and unbelief.

The only alleged evidence of its Pelagianism is contained in what is said about the voluntariness of actual sin in adult man, as opposed to a *supposed created instinct*, or the *direct efficiency of God*, producing actual sin by an irresistible and fatal necessity ; but from the text, subject, argument, and inferences of the discourse, it is undeniable that it has reference only to actual sin and total depravity, and has no direct reference to original sin at all. It was written in Connecticut, anterior to the controversies which now agitate the Church. It was demanded to encounter and resist the most specious Pelagian argument against the total depravity of man which I have ever seen. It was deduced from the various noble and amiable traits of human constitution and conduct which survive the fall, and are always urged as matter-of-fact exceptions to the doctrine of total depravity : such as taste and admiration of moral fitness ; approbation of truth

and justice; constitutional kindness and sympathy and compassion; the natural affections, which unite the family in all their tenderness and power; the amiable constitutional temperaments which survive the fall; honor and honesty in dealings, and liberality as opposed to covetousness and miserly meanness; correct morality, power of conscience, public spirit, patriotism, great usefulness, accompanied by a copious retinue of good works. The argument against total depravity was written, and read, and commented on with great ability, and in a manner which compelled me to provide the antidote. With an especial view, then, to meet and refute these Pelagian matter-of-fact exceptions to the doctrine of total adult depravity, I constructed the sermon which is now adduced in evidence against me on the subject of original sin. I began with the position that unrenewed men have no true religion, because that was a point conceded; and having established it, as I believed, I proceeded to draw the inferences which, as I supposed, cut up by the roots these Pelagian virtues as having any *claim* to be considered valid exceptions to the doctrine of total depravity; leaving in its full force the evidence that in adult man there dwelleth no good thing, and that every imagination of his heart is evil only continually. Now, that this sermon, written on purpose to put down the Pelagian exceptions to total depravity, should be years after, in another and distant department of the Church, quoted and admitted as a proof of my Pelagianism, would be an anomaly of mental obliquity and injustice which I am sure cannot find a place in the judicatures of the Presbyterian Church. Even had it contained, in the ardor of argument, expressions not sufficiently guarded, and which by possibility might be interpreted to mean heresy, no court, in the unbiased exercise of Christian candor, would permit them to be turned aside

from the main design and governing argument of the discourse. Much less where, though it was not the object of the sermon to establish the doctrine of original sin, it does so by proving two of the fundamental doctrines always relied on by the Orthodox Church, and by Edwards in particular, to prove the doctrine of original sin; I mean the doctrine of total depravity and the doctrine of regeneration. One of the main arguments of Edwards to prove original sin is the universality and entireness of actual sin; from which he infers that, anterior to actual agency, there is in all men, as a consequence of our federal alliance with Adam, some common cause, ground or reason, of universal and total actual depravity, which he calls "the influence of a prevailing, effectual tendency in the nature of man" to actual sin. And thus I prove the doctrine of original sin,— incidentally, indeed, but really,— by proving the actual, universal, total depravity of man. There must be, and there is, in man, something anterior to voluntary action, which is the ground and reason that the will of fallen man does from the beginning act wrong. To say that all men sin actually, and entirely, and universally, and forever, until renewed by the Holy Ghost, and that against the strongest possible motives, merely because they are free agents, and are able to do so,— and that there is in their nature, as affected by the fall, no cause or reason of the certainty,— is absurd. It is to ascribe the most stupendous concurrence of perverted action in all the adult millions of mankind to nothing. The thing to be accounted for is the phenomenon of an entire series of universal actual sin; and to ascribe the universal and entire obliquity of the human will to the simple ability of choosing wrong, is to ascribe the moral obliquity of a lost world to nothing.

This was the point of the controversy in Edwards on the

Will, against the Arminian theory of self-determination. The free agency claimed by the Arminian was one which excluded not only force and absolute necessity of nature from deciding the will, but denied the existence of any *internal constitution* or *objective influence of motive*, as connected with our constitutional susceptibilities, in securing the existence or determining the moral qualities of choice.

Edwards affirmed that there must be, and is, anterior to the exercise of free agency, some constitution of the agent and relevancy of motive, as the ground and reason of the certainty of choice, though not a coercive cause; and his antagonists deny that there is *any cause, ground or reason* of the certainty of choice, holy or unholy, in or out of man, anterior to its existence — assuming the necessity of a perfect indifference of will in all cases immediately anterior to volition, and the actual uncertainty of choice, as affected by any cause or reason anterior to its existence; and the necessity to its freedom and accountability that in every case it should be the simple, uninfluenced energy of the mind itself. And what Edwards attempts to prove, and does prove, in his treatise on the Will and on original sin, is, that to choice of any kind there is in the agent some constitution which is the ground or reason that motives become, not, indeed, the coercive causes, but the certain occasions of volition; and that, in man, before the fall, there was a constitution which was the ground and reason of the unperverted exercise of his will and affections in loving and obeying God; and that by the fall a change was effected in the nature of man anterior to voluntary action which is the cause or reason of the universal certainty of the perversion of the will and affections of fallen man; and that the antecedents of perfect actual holiness and entire actual sin are properly denominated, with reference to those certain

results in action, a holy or an unholy nature : only guarding, as our Confession does, alike against the Antinomian fatality of the will by *force*, and the Arminian self-determination, without any antecedent constitutional cause, ground or reason, within or without.

These views, as held by Edwards, and corroborated by our own Confession and the standard writers of our Church, comprehend the doctrine which I have always believed and preached ; and never have I knowingly and intentionally, at any time, expressed a sentiment, verbally or in writing, to the contrary.

The falseness and folly of the common notion of the self-determination of the mind by its own energy of will, without any cause or occasion even, is sufficiently manifest, in its opposition to the possibility of moral government on the part of God, or the possibility of praise or blame on the part of man : for moral government is the government of a lawgiver, influencing the will and conduct of subjects by the influence of laws, rewards, punishments, and administration. But if nothing may approach the mind, in the form of influence, having any tendency to destroy the dignified indifference of the will, or secure the certainty or probability even of volition, then, though self-government might exist, the government of God could not ; and nothing but the most perfect anarchy could exist as the accidental, uncaused, and unoccasioned action of millions of independent minds, acting without any cause, ground or reason. Indeed, it would render choice itself impossible, as it supposes a mind without susceptibility or desire of anything, or one thing more than another,—a condition of mind precluding the possibility of choice, which always implies excited desire, and a prospect of some gratification, and without which man would be less capable of choice

than a snail or an oyster : and even if he could choose without desire, reason or motive, the offspring of such a non-descript mental anomaly would be no more praise or blame worthy than the motions of a pendulum or the tickings of a watch,—uncertain of being till they come into being, and coming without any cause, ground, or reason,—bubbles from the bottom of the muddy lake might as well be regarded as accountable and worthy of praise or blame, as the volition of men.

I adopt, therefore, with approbation, the language of Professor Hodge, in his Commentary on Romans :

Of all the facts ascertained by the history of the world, it would seem to be among the plainest that men are born destitute of a disposition to seek their chief good in God, and with a disposition to make self-gratification the great end of their being. Even reason, conscience, natural affection, are less universal characteristics of our fallen race. For there are idiots and moral monsters often to be met with ; but for a child of Adam, uninfluenced by the special grace of God, to delight in his Maker, as the portion of his soul, from the first dawn of his moral being, is absolutely without example among all the thousands of millions of men who have inhabited our world. If experience can establish anything, it establishes the truth of the scriptural declaration, “that which is born of the flesh is flesh.” It would seem no less plain that this cannot be the original and *normal* state of man,—that human nature is not now what it was when it proceeded from the hand of God. Everything else which God has made answers the end of its being ; but human nature, since the fall, has uniformly worked badly ; in no one instance has it spontaneously turned to God as its chief good. It cannot be believed that God thus made man ; that there has been no perversion of his faculties,—no loss of some original and guiding disposition or tendency of his mind. It cannot be credited that men are now what Adam was, when he first opened his eyes on the wonders of creation and the glories of God. Reason, scripture and experience, therefore, all concur in support of the common doctrine of the Christian world, that the race fell in Adam, lost their original rectitude, and became prone to evil as the sparks to fly upward.

But, in addition to this argumentative implication of original sin, I do, in the very passage claimed to deny it, expressly allude to and recognize its existence as a reality, only limiting its action as Edwards and our Confession do, as not forcing the will, or by any absolute necessity of nature determining it to evil. I say :

Whatever effect, therefore, the fall of man may have had on his race, it has not had the effect to render it impossible for man to love God religiously ; and whatever may be the early constitution of man, there is nothing in it, and nothing withheld from it, which renders [actual] disobedience unavoidable, and [actual] obedience impossible.

Finally, the language of the paragraph, interpreted by the laws of just exposition, does not teach or imply a denial of the doctrine of original sin.

I have already shown that my sermon on the native character of man was not designed to have any reference to original sin ; that it spake only of the present, actual condition of adult mind, and that the question how a man came into such a state was not so much as touched ; that I was teaching the existence of total depravity against a wily and practised antagonist, with the sole view of cutting up his false Pelagian positions, and proving total depravity and the necessity of regeneration.

To comprehend fully the import of my language, it must be understood that there were two philosophical theories in respect to the cause of adult actual depravity : the one holding it to be a *moral instinct*, a *created faculty of the soul*, as really as any other *faculty*, which controlled the will according to its moral nature, as the helm governs the ship, and upon which the will could no more react than the ship can react on the helm ; the other, a philosophy which discards this

instinctive, involuntary moral taste, and substitutes the *direct efficiency of God*, for the *creation* of all exercises and acts of choice, *good* and *bad*.

These philosophical theories were prevalent long before this controversy arose. The question concerning original sin was not discussed in my congregation; touching that question, all was as quiet as the sleep of infancy. The question was as to the voluntariness of the depravity of adult man. Keep this in remembrance, and then the import of the sermon cannot be misunderstood. After proving that the depravity of man is very great, I proceed to say that it is voluntary; and this doctrine I advance in opposition to the philosophy which represents man's *actual sin*, *his actual total depravity*, as being the *necessary coërcive result of a moral instinct, or of divine efficiency*. The question was, whether the selfishness and enmity against God, and wordliness and pride, which obstructed evangelical obedience in adult man, and made regeneration by the Spirit indispensable, was a state of mind produced and continued by a coërcive necessity; and in accordance with the Bible and the Confession of Faith, and the whole Orthodox Church, I say — no! — but, “that God has endued the will of fallen man with that natural liberty, that it is neither forced, nor by any absolute necessity of nature determined, to good or evil.” It is this nature of adult man, in a state of personal accountability and active depravity, that I am speaking of, as the subject and whole argument of the sermon show, in every sentence and word of the page quoted; and it is of this total actual depravity of man, which makes regeneration by the Spirit necessary, that I say it cannot be the product of “*an unavoidable necessity*,” and it is of actual holiness and sin that I am speaking, when I say that to the existence of a holy or a sinful nature perception, under-

standing, conscience and choice, are indispensable. And is this heresy? Does any one believe that personal accountability, and actual sin, and holiness, can exist without perception, understanding, conscience, and choice; and that the Bible and the Confession of Faith teach it?

Dr. Greene says, "The parties in this controversy are agreed that all actual sin is voluntary, and therefore criminal and inexcusable."—*Ch. Adv.* 1831, p. 348.

Social, representative *liability*, and a just desert of punishment in that sense, is a possibility and a reality; but a *social liability*, and *personal demerit*, are quite different things; and if it shall be made to appear that the Bible and the Confession do teach the possibility of personal actual sin and just punishment, without the existence of the faculties of perception, understanding, conscience and choice, it will, as I believe, be regarded by the whole Church of God as a new discovery.

I call this actual depravity of man *native*, in accordance with the language of the Bible and the most approved theological writers, to indicate its universality, as what all men come to by nature,—that is, by the operation and influence of that change produced in the nature of man by the fall,—to mark its positiveness, as including actual enmity, selfishness, pride and idolatry, instead of a mere want of conformity to the law of God,—and especially to designate its permanence as compared to successive acts of choice, and its fearful immutability to all finite power. The Scriptures speak of the permanence and immutability of man's actual depravity—as a *heart* full of madness and of evil—fully set to do evil; and Turretin calls it a "voluntary and culpable habit of will;" and Edwards says, "By a general and habitual moral inability I mean an inability in the heart to all exercises or acts of will of that nature or kind, through a *fixed and*

habitual inclination, or an habitual or stated defect, or want of a certain kind of inclination.”

Now, not only has all I have said on the page objected to, a reference to the actual sin of adult man as the ground of the necessity of regeneration, but it is all so guarded and tied down, and related to the subject of actual sin, that it can by no possibility be torn away from it, and attached to the subject of original sin. For, in the very statements I make about the voluntary nature of which I am speaking, I allude to the fall and original sin, and admit and include its existence among the causes which fortify adult man against submission to God, as I have more fully done in my exposition of the moral inability of man in this discussion, only making the reservation which the Confession makes — that original sin does not force the will to actual sin, nor by any absolute necessity of nature determine it to evil, so as that God is the author of sin, or that violence is offered to the will of the creatures; or the liberty or contingency of second causes (the power of choosing life or death) taken away, but is rather established.

The declarations, that there is a time when actual sin commences, and that the first sin is voluntary, uncoerced, inexcusable, and might have been and ought to have been avoided as really as any of the actual sins that followed it, will not, I apprehend, alarm any large proportion of the Church. The distinction between original and actual sin has been universal in the Orthodox Church; and the more common opinion, as I suppose, has always been that actual sin does not commence from the womb, and that the time when social liability is succeeded by personal demerit for actual transgression is not and cannot be exactly known to any but the eye of God. What I have asserted is, that whenever personal accountability does commence, in the sight of God the sinner is a free agent,

and inexcusable for his first as really as for any other actual sin.

I perceive that what I wrote ten years ago, with my eye wholly on the subject of man's nature as an actual sinner and totally depraved, read by a person at the present time, in a state of alarm and excitement about the Pelagian heresy on the subject of original sin, might, if not read with great care and attention, be liable to be misunderstood, as denying that depravity of nature which is peculiar to original sin: but the moment the laws of candid, correct interpretation, are applied, the possibility of such an interpretation is precluded, and the true limit, meaning, and intent of my language, is made apparent. For it cannot be that a sermon professedly against the Pelagian notions of virtue and good works in man, as exceptions to the doctrine of total depravity, and containing a formal and labored argument in the defence of that doctrine, and inferring from it the necessity of regeneration, and an anti-Pelagian instantaneous regeneration by the special influence of the Holy Spirit, should be found intentionally teaching the very doctrine it set out to oppose, and opposing the very doctrine it was constructed to establish.

Were any evidence beside the internal evidence of the discourse itself necessary, it is contained in a sermon written about the same time that this sermon on native character was written, and written professedly on original sin. The following are my comments on several passages in Romans v.:

“For as by one man's disobedience many were made sinners.”—Adam was created holy and placed in a state of probation—the consequences of which were to extend not only to himself, but to his posterity. If he continued holy, they would be born holy. If he became a sinner, his children would be born depraved. In the hour of temptation he fell,

and LOST FOR A WORLD the inheritance of life, and entailed upon it the sad inheritance of depravity and woe.

“For if by ONE man’s offence death reigned by one.”—How did death reign by ONE man’s offence, if the depravity of his race was not somehow a consequence of his sin? If his posterity are born holy (innocent), and became sinners by their own act alone, uninfluenced by what Adam did, then death enters the world not by one man, but by every man.

“The judgment was by one man to condemnation ;” that is, the sin of one man, and one single act of sin, subjected his posterity to a nature prone to sin, as the consequence.

I give these quotations to show that though, when writing on the total actual depravity of man, my expressions may have misled some to understand me as denying original sin, I did, at the same period, when writing professedly on that subject, recognize the doctrine fully and strongly, and at the time was never, to my knowledge, misunderstood.

What follows is from my lecture on the Fall and its Consequences, delivered in Boston and Cincinnati :

By the appointment of God, the character and destiny of man was inseparably connected with the conduct of Adam. He was in *such a sense* the federal head and representative of his posterity, that, according to God’s appointment, had Adam continued holy, his posterity would have continued holy, as his disobedience has drawn after it the defections of the race. The universal bias of man to evil is denominated a depraved nature, on account of its universal tendencies to actual sin.

Here I might stop ; for I am under no obligation to volunteer statements of my opinions in respect to the subjects on which I am accused. My errors are to be shown by evidence ; and I say that, in this case, the evidence has utterly failed ; and I might, therefore, repel the charge of heresy, as not established. But I have no secrets on this subject, nor

in respect to any of the religious opinions which I hold. At my time of life, and especially under the circumstances in which I am placed, both as pastor of a flock and an instructor of the rising ministry of the Church, I have no right to any secret opinions. I scorn concealment, and therefore I will declare with all openness the things which I do believe. The Presbytery shall not *suspect* me of being a heretic. If I am a heretic, they shall *know* it. You shall have, in respect to my views of original sin, the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth.

1. As to the federal or representative character of Adam, and the covenant with him and his posterity. — I have, through my whole public life, believed and taught that the constitution and character of his entire posterity, as perverted or unperverted, depended on his obedience or defection; and that he was in *this respect*, and by God's appointment, constitutionally the head and representative of his race. And that, in this sense, all mankind, descending from him by ordinary generation, sinned *in him*, and fell with him in his first transgression; that is, their character and destiny were decided by his deed.

For a more ample expression of my views, I submit the remarks of Dr. Bishop, President of the Miami University, on the subject of *Social Liabilities*, the best name ever devised for the idea; — a name which, I hope, we shall all remember, as it is calculated to avoid much error which has arisen from the use of other phraseology. In respect to the book from which I am about to quote, I heartily thank that great and good man for having condensed so much truth into so small a compass; and I do believe that the simple substitution of this technic, "social liability," would carry us all out of the swamp together. For we in fact think, and ought

to speak, the same thing. After illustrating the social liabilities of men, for the conduct of others in the family, in commercial relations, and as parts of a nation, and as social and moral beings affected by the nameless influences of the Christian example or evil deeds of our fellow-men, he proceeds to say :

1. That every man is, by his very nature, intimately connected, in a great variety of ways, with thousands of his fellow-men whom he has never seen ; and that the conduct and the character of a single individual may have an extensive and a lasting influence upon millions of his fellow-men, though far removed from him, both as to time and place.

2. That these liabilities may be classed under two general heads, namely, Natural and Positive. The son inherits a diseased or a healthy body, and, in many cases, also an intellectual or moral character ; and generation after generation sustains the character of their ancestors, by what may be called a natural influence. Like produces and continues like. But in commercial and political transactions lasting and important liabilities are created and continued by positive arrangements.

3. That, in all cases of social liabilities, individual and representative responsibility are always kept distinct. Nor is it, in the most of cases, a very difficult thing to have a clear and distinct conception of these two distinct responsibilities.

Every citizen of these United States who thinks at all must feel that himself and his children, and his children's children, are deeply interested in the conduct and character of the President of the United States for the time being. An able and virtuous president, with an able and wise and faithful cabinet, must be a great blessing to the millions, both the born and unborn, on both sides of the Atlantic. And, on the other hand, a weak and a wicked president and cabinet must be the occasion of inconceivable inconveniences and real privations and sufferings to countless millions, both of the present and succeeding generations. But yet no man ever thought of attributing to himself, or to his children, the personal wisdom, or intellectual ability, or inflexible integrity, which has marked the character of any distinguished executive officer ; nor, on the other hand, has he ever thought of being charged individually, or of having his children charged individually, with the weakness or wickedness of a bad executive officer. He and his children, and his neighbors and their chil-

dren, feel and acknowledge that they are personally and deeply involved in the consequences of the official acts of these men, whether these consequences are of a beneficial or a hurtful tendency ; but, at the same time, individual and personal merit and demerit, and individual and personal responsibility, are clearly understood, and never, for a moment, *merged in social and representative transactions.*

From a view of the above facts it follows :

4. That the terms *guilty* and *innocent* must, with every thinking man, be used in a *different sense*, when they are applied to responsibilities incurred by the *conduct of another, from that in which they are used when they are applied to personal conduct.* In the former application, *guilty* can only mean liability to suffer *punishment*, and *innocent* to be not liable. But in the latter application they mean, having violated, or having not violated, some moral or positive commandment. In the one case the terms apply to a personal act, and to personal character ; but in the other they only mark the *nature and the consequences of a certain act or acts, as these consequences are felt by another person.*

5. In every case of social liability, *unity* is recognized. The individuals concerned may be millions, or only two, and they may be in every other respect and bearing distinct and separate ; but in the particular case in which liability applies they are in law only *one moral person.*

The father and son, the ancestor and the descendant, have only one common nature, or *one common right.* In commercial transactions the company is *one*, though composed of many individuals ; and the nation, acting by the constituted authorities, with all her other varieties and differences, while a nation, continues *one* and indivisible.

And here let me say that this principle is recognized in the relation of Adam to his posterity, and of theirs to him ; so that the effects which fell on him as a punishment fell on them as a calamity.

There is, in my apprehension, something of this constitutional social liability pervading the whole moral universe, and inseparable from the nature of mind and moral government, and the effects of temptation, character and example. It is probable that rational beings, constituted as they are, cannot be brought together so that the action of one will not in

some degree affect the character of others. . . Whether it was a positive appointment merely, or whether it was an inevitable effect flowing from the nature of things, or, which is more probable, the united result of both,—such was the constitution established by God between Adam and his seed; so that if Adam should stand, all his children would retain their integrity; but if he should fall, they would fall with him. And we may well apply to the fall of our first parents the affecting language of Mark Antony over Cæsar's body:

“O, what a fall was there, my countrymen!
Then you, and I, and all of us, fell down.”

The constitution was equally certain both ways; and in this respect it was just and equal. If, then, it be asked whether I hold that Adam was the federal head of his posterity, I answer, Certainly he was; because that which he did decided what was to be the character and conduct of all his posterity. If the inquiry is made, whether I admit the imputation of Adam's sin,—if imputation be understood to mean that Adam's posterity were present in him, and thus sinned in him,—I answer, No; and Dr. Wilson answers, No. And here we are agreed. For if mankind were present in Adam, and in that sense sinned in him, who does not see that their sin was *actual*, not original,—*personal*, and not derived, or transmitted, or propagated?

Again, if by original sin be meant that Adam's personal moral qualities were transferred to his posterity (a theory which, like the other, had once its day), I reply that I do not and cannot believe any such thing; neither does Dr. Wilson believe it. And here let me say that all the alarm and all the odium which have been excited in relation to the divines in New England have arisen from two things: their

opposition to the notion of personal identity with Adam ; and their denial of the transfer of his moral qualities to his posterity. But neither of these things is involved in the charges preferred against me by Dr. Wilson.

What, then, is the true doctrine of original sin? It is the obnoxiousness of Adam's posterity to the penal consequences of his transgression ; to all that came in that stream of evils which his offence let in upon the world. The same change of constitution, of nature and character, which was wrought in him by his transgression, appears in them through all their generations. This liability, this exposedness to punishment, is in the Confession called "guilt;" but that word, as then used, conveyed theologically a different meaning from what is now usually attached to the term. By guilt we now understand the desert of punishment for personal sin ; but this is not the sense of the word in the Confession of Faith ; there it means *liability to evil* in consequence of Adam's sin. This was another of the spots where I stumbled once at the language of the Confession. I could not consent to the punishment in my person of the guilt of Adam's sin, as if it were my own. To that I do not now consent. That, I now believe, the Confession of Faith does not teach ; but I cordially receive it as teaching that Adam was our representative indirectly ; that on his breaking God's righteous commands, the curse, which fell like a thunderbolt on the offender, struck all his posterity and all the animal world, struck the ground on which he stood, and the whole world in which he dwelt.

"Earth felt the wound."

This social liability is illustrated in the fall of angels. The influence of one master spirit drew away (as it would

seem, from some passages in Scripture) one-third part of the heavenly host. Let sedition and revolt take place in a nation,—who gets it up? Does the entire mass of the nation rise spontaneously and simultaneously, by one common impulse? No. Some leading mind first fires the train; and though one-half the population may ultimately perish under the reaction of the government, their death is to be traced up to one master-spirit as the mover and promoter of the whole commotion. Let us never forget the maxim,—it is worthy to be written in letters of gold,—“Individual and representative responsibility are always to be kept distinct.” I adopt this language of Dr. Bishop, and lay it in as an exposition of my own views with respect to the character of Adam, to guilt as imputed, and to punishment as the consequence of our social relations. I have always adopted the language of Edwards, as correctly stating the truth on this subject:

In consequence of Adam's sin, all mankind do constantly, in all ages, without fail in any one instance, run into the moral evil, which is, in effect, their own utter and eternal perdition, and a total privation of God's favor, and suffering of his vengeance and wrath.

So that the real doctrine is not that Adam's posterity were one in personal identity, or personally guilty by a transfer of sinful moral qualities or actions; but simply that a part of the curse of the law that fell on Adam fell indirectly on his posterity in the loss of original righteousness, which would have been their inheritance had Adam obeyed, and that change of the constitution of human nature from which results the certainty of entire actual sin. Now, what the particular change was which furnished the ground of this absolute certainty that all mankind would run into sin, I do

not profess to understand. Paul, in the fifth chapter to the Romans, states the facts of the case, as involving, through the fall, a nature spoiled, and under such an effectual bias, that, as soon as the mind acts, it acts wrong. This is all that I can say touching original sin. All is confusion and darkness beyond this. I have no light, and pretend to no knowledge. And surely there is no heresy in ignorance. I always believed in original sin, and that Adam was the federal head of his posterity ; and although I have not used generally that particular phrase, I believe as much in the truth it is intended to convey as any man in the Church. I believe that God legislated wisely for Adam ; that the effects of his fall reached all his posterity, and produced in them such a change that the human mind, which before obeyed, thenceforward disobeyed ; and that, in consequence of the change which took place in Adam himself, the bias to holiness which, had he stood, would have been the blessed inheritance of all his children, was utterly lost, so that they now inherit a corrupt nature. I have always called it so. I have expressly denominated it a depraved nature. I believe they inherit this not as actual personal sin ; that it comes upon them not as a punishment of their personal sin, but as a political evil would come upon the people of the United States from the evil conduct of the chief magistrate. In a word, that we share the character of our fallen progenitor, and all the deplorable effects of his transgression.

The following additional quotations will show that these views are the received doctrines of the Church :

Turretin (as quoted by Hodge on Romans), *Theol. Elench. Quæst.* ix. p. 678, says : “ Imputation is either of something foreign to us, or of something properly our own. Sometimes that is imputed to us which is personally ours ; in which sense God imputes to sinners their transgres-

sions. Sometimes that is imputed which is without us, and not performed by ourselves ; thus the righteousness of Christ is said to be imputed to us, and our sins are imputed to him, although he has neither sin in himself, nor we righteousness. Here we speak of the latter kind of imputation, not the former ; because we are treating of a sin committed by Adam, not by us." The ground of this imputation is the union between Adam and his posterity. This union is not a mysterious identity of person, but, 1. "Natural, as he is the father, and we are the children. 2. Political and forensic, as he was the representative head and chief of the whole human race. The foundation, therefore, of imputation, is not only the natural connection which exists between us and Adam, since, in that case, all his sins might be imputed to us, but mainly the moral and federal, in virtue of which God entered into covenant with him as our head."

TUCKNEY (*Prælectiones*, p. 234) : "We are counted righteous through Christ in the same manner that we are counted guilty through Adam. The latter is by imputation ; therefore, also, the former." "We are not so foolish or blasphemous as to say, or even to think, that the imputed righteousness of Christ makes us formally and subjectively righteous."

OWEN (in his work on Justification, p. 236) says : "Things which are not our own originally, inherently, may yet be imputed to us, *ex justitia*, by the rule of righteousness. And this may be done upon a double relation unto those whose they are,—1. Federal ; 2. Natural. Things done by one may be imputed unto others, *propter relationem fœderalem*, because of a covenant relation between them. So the sin of Adam was imputed to all his posterity. And the ground hereof is, that we stood in the same covenant with him who was our head and representative." On p. 242 he says, "This imputation (of Christ's righteousness) is not the transmission or transfusion of the righteousness of another into them which are to be justified, that they should become perfectly and inherently righteous thereby. For it is impossible that the righteousness of one should be transfused into another, to become his subjectively and inherently." Again, p. 307 : "As we are made guilty by Adam's actual sin, which is not inherent in us, but only imputed to us, so we are made righteous by the righteousness of Christ, which is not inherent in us, but only imputed to us." On p. 468 he says, "Nothing is intended by the imputation of sin unto any, but the rendering them justly obnoxious unto the punishment due unto that sin. As the not imputing of sin is the freeing of men from being subject or liable to punishment." It is one of his standing declarations, "To be *alienæ*

culpæ reus (that is, to be guilty of another's crime) MAKES NO MAN A SINNER."

KNAPP (in his *Lectures on Theology*, sect. 76) says, in stating what the doctrine of imputation is: "God's imputing the sin of our first parents to their descendants amounts to this: God punishes the descendants on account of the sin of their first parents." This he gives as a mere historical statement of the nature of the doctrine, and the form in which its advocates maintained it.

ZACHARIÆ (*Bib. Theologie*, vol. II. p. 394) says, "If God allows the punishment which Adam incurred to come on all his descendants, he imputes his sin to them all. And in this sense Paul maintains that the sin of Adam is imputed to all, because the punishment of the one offence of Adam has come upon all."

BRETSCHNEIDER, when stating the doctrine of the Reformers, as presented in the various creeds published under their authority, says that they regarded justification, which includes the idea of imputation, as a forensic or judicial act of God, by which the relation of man to God, and not the man himself, was changed. And imputation of righteousness they described as "That judgment of God, according to which he treats us as though we had not sinned, but had fulfilled the law, or as though the righteousness of Christ was ours." This view of justification they constantly maintained, in opposition to the Papists, who regarded it as a moral change, consisting in what they called the infusion of righteousness.

I shall now show that this is the view entertained by the Professors of the Princeton Seminary:

"What we deny, therefore, is, first, that this doctrine involves any mysterious union with Adam, any confusion of our identity with his, so that his act was properly and personally our act; and, secondly, that the moral turpitude of that sin was transferred from him to us, — we deny the possibility of any such transfer. These are the two ideas which the Spectator and others consider as necessarily involved in the doctrine of imputation, and for rejecting which they represent us as having abandoned the old doctrine on the subject."

"The words *guilt* and *punishment* are those particularly referred to. The former we had defined to be liability or exposedness to punishment. We did not mean to say that the word never included the idea of moral turpitude or criminality. We were speaking of its theological usage. It is

very possible that a word may have one sense in common life, and another somewhat modified in particular sciences.”

“Punishment, according to our views, is an evil inflicted on a person, in the execution of a judicial sentence, on account of sin. That the word is used in this sense, for evils thus inflicted on one person for the offence of another, cannot be denied. It would be easy to fill a volume with examples of this usage.” — *Biblical Repertory*, pp. 346, 440, 441.

HODGE ON ROMANS. — The doctrine of imputation is clearly taught in this passage. This doctrine does not include the idea of a mysterious identity of Adam and his race, nor that of a transfer of the moral turpitude of his sin to his descendants. It does not teach that his offence was personally or properly the sin of all men, or that his act was, in any mysterious sense, the act of his posterity. Neither does it imply, in reference to the righteousness of Christ, that his righteousness becomes personally and inherently ours, or that his moral excellence is in any way transferred from him to believers. The sin of Adam, therefore, is no ground to us of remorse, and the righteousness of Christ is no ground of self-complacency in those to whom it is imputed. This doctrine merely teaches, that in virtue of the union, representative and natural, between Adam and his posterity, his sin is the ground of their condemnation, that is, of their subjection to penal evils ; and that, in virtue of the union between Christ and his people, his righteousness is the ground of their justification. — p. 221.

Whatever evil the Scriptures represent as coming upon us on account of Adam, they regard as penal ; they call it death, which is the general term by which any penal evil is expressed.

It is not, however, the doctrine of the Scriptures, nor of the Reformed churches, nor of our standards, that the corruption of nature of which they speak is any depravation of the soul, or an essential attribute, or the infusion of any positive evil. “Original sin,” as the confessions of the Reformers maintain, “is not the substance of man, neither his soul nor body ; nor is it anything infused into his nature by Satan, as poison is mixed with wine ; it is not an essential attribute, but an accident, that is, something which does not exist of itself, an incidental quality, &c.” — *Bretschneider*, vol. II. p. 30. These confessions teach that original righteousness, as a punishment of Adam’s sin, was lost, and by that defect the tendency to sin, or corrupt disposition, or corruption of nature, is occasioned. Though they speak of original sin as being, first, negative, that is, the loss of righteousness ; and, secondly, positive, or corruption of nature, — yet by the

latter, they state, is to be understood, not the infusion of anything in *itself sinful*, but an actual tendency or disposition to evil, resulting from the loss of righteousness. — pp. 229, 230.

We derive from Adam a nature destitute of any native tendency to the love and service of God ; and since the soul, from its nature, is filled, as it were, with susceptibilities, dispositions, or tendencies to certain modes of acting, or to objects out of itself, if destitute of the governing tendency or disposition to holiness and God, it has, of course, a tendency to self-gratification and sin. — p. 231.

I now refer to a judicial decision of the General Assembly, in the case of Mr. Balch.

The transferring of personal sin or righteousness has never been held by Calvinistic divines, nor by any person in our Church, as far as is known to us. But, with regard to his (Mr. B.'s) doctrine of original sin, it is to be observed that he is erroneous in representing personal corruption as not derived from Adam ; making Adam's sin to be imputed to his posterity in consequence of a corrupt nature *already possessed*, and derived from we know not what ; thus in effect setting aside the idea of Adam's being the federal head or representative of his descendants, and the whole doctrine of the covenant of works. — *Assembly's Digest*, p. 130.

My next authority is Dr. Wilson himself.

Let us guard here against some mistakes. The doctrine of a union of representation does not involve in it the idea of personal identity. It does not mean that Adam and his posterity are the same identical persons. It does not mean that his act was properly and personally their act. Nor does it mean that the moral turpitude of Adam's sin was transferred to his descendants. The transfer of moral character makes no part of the doctrine of imputation.

And now, supposing this to be the just and true intent of the terms, as indicated by the established laws of exposition, and confirmed by the standard writers of our Church, acquiesced in and corroborated by her highest judicature, then I believe and teach that "Adam being the root of all mankind, the guilt of his sin was imputed, and the same death in sin

and corrupted nature conveyed to all his posterity, descending from him by ordinary generation : ” that from “ this original corruption, whereby we are utterly indisposed, disabled, and made opposite to all good, and wholly inclined to all evil, do proceed all actual transgressions ; and that the covenant being made with Adam, not only for himself but for his posterity, all mankind, descending from him by ordinary generation, sinned in him and fell with him in his first transgression ; ” that the sinfulness of that estate whereinto man fell consists in the guilt of Adam’s first sin, the want of original righteousness, and the corruption of his whole nature, which is commonly called original sin, together with all actual transgressions which proceed from it ; and that by the fall of our first parents “ all mankind lost communion with God, are under his wrath and curse, and so made *liable* to all the miseries of this life, to death itself, and to the pains of hell forever. ”

I believe also, and always have believed and taught, that infants are the subjects of original sin, and, as distinguished from actual sin, consisting in the “ influence of a prevailing effectual tendency in their nature ” to actual sin ; and that, on account of this prevalent tendency, it is, in the Bible, the Confession, and the common language of men, justly denominated a depraved nature ; and that, being thus depraved, and considered in their social liabilities as one with Adam, they, no more than adults, could be saved without an atonement and the special influence of the Holy Spirit in regeneration, to overcome and remove this bias to evil of original corruption, and secure the unperverted exercise of their voluntary powers in spiritual obedience, and ultimately be prepared for perfect conformity to the will of God in heaven. I scarce ever attended the funeral of an infant without an express recognition of these views upon infant depravity, and the atonement

and regeneration as the only ground of hope that they are saved.

I close this discussion in respect to original sin with the following concise epitome of my own views, which, as I understand and believe, have been and are the received doctrines of the Church of God in every age :

1. Original sin is the effect of Adam's sin upon the constitution of his race, in consequence of his being their federal head and representative by a divine appointment or covenant.

2. It does not consist in the sinfulness of matter, according to the Gnostics, or in the sinfulness of the soul's essence, according to the Manicheans : but

3. It consists in the perversion of those constitutional powers and susceptibilities which in Adam before the fall eventuated in actual and perfect obedience, and which in their perverted condition by the fall eventuate in actual and total depravity.

4. It is in its nature involuntary ; and yet, though certain and universal in its influence to pervert the will and affections, does neither force the will, nor by an absolute necessity of nature determine it to evil, or impair obligation, or excuse actual sin. It descends from Adam, by natural generation, through all the race.

It is a bias or tendency of nature to actual sin, which baffles all motives and all influence short of Omnipotence, to prevent its eventuation in total actual depravity, or to restore the perverted will and affections to holy obedience.

It is this bias to evil, the effect of the fall, which, though impaired by regeneration, is not annihilated, but remains in the regenerate,—which, combined with the habits of actual sin, constitutes the law in the members warring against the law of the mind, preventing, until the soul at death is made meet

for heaven, the unbiased and unperverted exercise of the will and affections, in perfect accordance with the moral law.

It is denominated by Edwards, and justly, an exceedingly evil and depraved nature, as being in all its tendencies and all its actual results adverse to the law; and on the ground of our alliance with Adam, our federal head, and our social liability, it results in that choice and character which deserve God's wrath and curse, including the evils of the life that now is, death itself, and the pains of hell forever.

Such, on the subject of Original Sin, are the views which I have always held and taught since I have been in the ministry; nor has any evidence been produced that I have ever at any time believed or taught the contrary. The entire evidence relied on is a misapprehension and misinterpretation of the passage adduced from my sermon; and there is now no evidence, not a syllable of evidence, to sustain the charge. Should it be inquired why I did not explain my views on original sin, and the misconceptions of my discourse, to Dr. Wilson, as I have now done, and save ourselves and the Church the affliction and annoyance of such a controversy, I answer that I often assured Dr. Wilson that he misunderstood my views and communications on that subject, and requested him, respectfully and earnestly, three or four times, to permit me to make the requisite explanations, and was as often refused.

On the subject of TOTAL DEPRAVITY my doctrine, and the evidence relied on for its support, are sufficiently manifest in the sermon on the Native Character of Man.*

It includes the absence of all holiness,—the want of conformity unto, and the actual transgression of the law of God.

It is universal—there being not a mere man, of all the millions of Adam's posterity, that hath lived and not sinned.

* *Vide* page 53.

It is entire ; every imagination of the thoughts of the heart being evil only,—there being none that do good,—no, not one.

It is positive—as including the actual preference of the creature to the Creator, which is enmity against God.

It is voluntary—though occasioned by original sin, the will is not forced, nor by any necessity determined to good or evil. But, though voluntary, with the possibility of turning to God, it is spontaneously immutable to any motive but the Word of God made effectual by his Spirit.

It was this view of total depravity, excluding all native virtue from the heart, motives, words, and deeds of man, which produced the reâction that occasioned the sermon on the native character of man.

I taught, with the Confession, that “works done by unregenerate men, although, for the matter of them, they may be things which God commands, and of good use both to themselves and others ; yet, because they proceed not from a heart purified by faith, nor are done in a right manner according to the Word, nor to a right end,—the glory of God,—they are therefore sinful, and cannot please God, or make a man meet to receive grace from God. And yet their neglect of them is more sinful, and displeasing unto God.”

It is a doctrine which, in various forms, I have explained, and proved, and preached, and applied, more than any other, as being especially the one by which the commandment comes and sin revives.

In respect to the doctrine of REGENERATION, or Effectual Calling, I am not apprized, precisely, what is the form of error which I am supposed to hold. But, if it be the Pelagian, as I conclude from the analogy of my supposed heresy on the subject of original sin, it must be that I deny that regenera-

tion is a radical change of character; but that it is in any special sense a work of God, save only as he has provided the instruction and motives which, by their natural influence and human endeavor, produce religion; and, of course, that I assert regeneration to be a gradual, and not an instantaneous change.

To all such apprehensions I reply, that nothing can be more contrary to the entire course of my faith and teaching on the subject, as all the Churches know which have been successively under my pastoral care, and all men who have attended my ministry with sufficient constancy to receive the image and body of my preaching. There is no subject, beside the kindred one of total depravity, which I have dwelt upon with such copiousness of explanation, proofs, and earnest application,—line upon line, in season and out of season,—as the subject of regeneration; insomuch that my stated hearers would as soon think of suspecting me of atheism as of Pelagianism, on the subject of regeneration.

That I have not been fully understood on a single point, I perceive; but that I shall be understood, and understood as teaching the doctrine in accordance with the Bible, and the Confession, and the generally received opinion of the Orthodox Church, I have a comfortable hope.

I am aware that a man's simple professions, when under suspicion of heresy, are but a poor defence against the amplifications of imagination and fear, especially when divisions and tumults and swellings exist; there may be for a season little to choose between being suspected of heresy, and being guilty of it. Instead, therefore, of making mere declarations of my belief, I shall state and illustrate my views on the several topics belonging to the subject of regeneration, as I

have been accustomed to state them in my discourses from the pulpit, and in my lectures to the students under my care. These topics are :

1. The nature ;
2. The efficient cause ;
3. The effectual means ; and
4. The necessity of regeneration.

1. THE NATURE OF REGENERATION. — By this I mean the nature of the change which is produced in the subject by the Spirit of God. This, according to my understanding of the Bible, is correctly disclosed in the doctrine of effectual calling as taught in the Confession of Faith and Catechisms, as including “the enlightening of the minds of men spiritually and savingly to understand the things of God, taking away their heart of stone, and giving a heart of flesh,—renewing their wills, and determining them to that which is good, and effectually drawing them to Jesus Christ,—yet so as they come freely, being made willing by his grace,—in his accepted time inviting and drawing them to Jesus Christ by his word and Spirit,—so as they (although in themselves dead in sin) are hereby made willing and able truly to answer his call, and to accept and embrace the grace offered and conveyed therein ;” or, as the Shorter Catechism teaches, more concisely, and with no less correctness :

Effectual calling is the work of God’s Spirit, whereby, convincing us of our sin and misery, enlightening our minds in the knowledge of Christ, and renewing our wills, he doth persuade and enable us to embrace Jesus Christ, freely offered us in the Gospel.

The substance of what is taught by this various phraseology is, that a change is effected in regeneration in respect to man’s chief *end*, in turning from the supreme love of self to

the supreme love of God,—from gratifying and exalting self, to gratifying and exalting God,—a giving up and turning from the world, in all its pomp and vanities, as the chief good, and returning to God as the chosen portion of the soul; withdrawing the affections from things below, and setting them on things above; ceasing to lay up our treasure on earth, and laying it up in heaven; and so grieving for and hating our past sins, as that we turn from them all to God, purposing and endeavoring to walk with God in all the ways of new obedience.

This, it will not, I think, be doubted, comprehends correctly the moral change which takes place in regeneration.

2. THE AUTHOR OR EFFICIENT CAUSE OF REGENERATION IS GOD. By efficient cause I mean that power without which all other influence is vain, and by which means otherwise impotent are made effectual. The power, then, which in all cases is the immediate antecedent and effectual cause of regeneration, is the special influence of the Holy Spirit. It is called the Holy Spirit, not by way of any preëminent personal excellence, but as the divine agent to whom is committed the work of commencing and perfecting holiness in the hearts of men.

That God is the efficient cause of regeneration, is plainly taught in the text, and throughout the Bible, in the various forms of metaphor, direct testimony, and multiplied implications. Is moral pollution in the way,—“I will sprinkle clean water upon you, and ye shall be clean.” Is stupidity and insensibility the impediment to be removed,—“I will take away the stony heart and give a heart of flesh.” Is the condition of man represented by the battle-field, a capacious valley whitened with bones,—it is God who says unto these bones, “Behold, I will cause breath to enter into you, and ye shall live.” Is it the helplessness of infancy abandoned in the

open field, with no eye to pity, or arm to save,—it is God who “passes by and bids us live.” Is it darkness which impedes our salvation,—it is “God who commandeth the light to shine out of darkness, who shines in our hearts.” Is death the calamity,—a resurrection is the remedy: “You hath he quickened who were dead in trespasses and sins, and raised us up to sit together in heavenly places in Christ.” Is it the annihilation of spiritual life,—regeneration is a new creation, “created anew in Christ Jesus unto good works.” Is it the old man who makes resistance to the claims of God,—the regenerated are said to be “born again, not of blood,” that is, not by natural descent, “nor of the will of the flesh,” the striving and efforts of sinners to save themselves, “nor of the will of man,” the efforts of men to save their fellow-men, “but of God; WHOSOEVER LOVETH IS BORN OF GOD.”

THE POWER OF GOD CONCERNED IN REGENERATION IS SUPERNATURAL. It is so,

(1.) As compared with the power of any created agent, man or angel.

(2.) IT IS SUPERNATURAL, as above the power of any law of nature, or natural efficacy of truth or motive, in the ordinary operation of cause and effect, natural or moral.

(3.) IT IS SUPERNATURAL, as distinguished from the stated operations of divine power, which are concerned in upholding all things, and guiding them in the stated order of cause and effect to their results, as earth and air, and rain and sunshine, produce vegetation, and cause harvests to wave in the field.

(4.) IT IS SUPERNATURAL, as being an interposition to accomplish unfailingly a change in the will and affections of men, which never takes place without it. And,

(5.) IT IS SUPERNATURAL, as it is an act of God's

ALMIGHTY POWER,—as really so as the creation of worlds, or the resurrection of the dead.

The question has been started, whether God is able to regenerate any more than he does. Unquestionably, so far as sufficient power is concerned, he is able to subdue all things to himself. The limitation in respect to the application of redemption is not one of impotency, but a limitation of the unerring wisdom and infinite benevolence of God,—the limitation of doing always and only, in the administration of grace, that which seemeth good in his sight, and is right and best. The discriminations of his justice and grace are voluntary. So far as his power is concerned, he is as able to subdue the wills of rebels as to control the elements. In his moral kingdom he is as truly THE LORD GOD OMNIPOTENT, working all things according to the counsel of his will, as he is in the government of the natural universe. He has placed nothing which he has made beyond the reach of his power; and he has made nothing which he cannot and does not govern, according to the counsel of his own will. The power of God in regeneration is represented as among the greatest displays of his omnipotence ever made, or to be made, in the history of the universe. When this fair creation rose fresh in beauty from the hand of God, the morning stars sang together, and all the sons of God shouted for joy; but sweeter songs will celebrate and louder shouts attend the consummation or redemption, by the power of God's Spirit; and such brighter glories of God, and higher illustrations of his power, will be manifested to principalities and powers by the Church, as will cause the light of his glory in physical creation to go out and be forgotten, as the stars fade and are lost amid the splendors of the sun. It is the united glory of God's power and goodness in redemption, and not the wonders of physical creation,

which inspires and perpetuate forever around his throne the voice of praise, as the sound of many waters and mighty thunderings, to Him who loved us, and died for us, and washed us in his blood, and made us kings and priests unto God.

The effect of this divine interposition is instantaneous — in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye. It must be instantaneous, from the nature of the case. If man is an idolater, there must be a time when he gives the idol up for God; if an enemy, there must be a time when he becomes reconciled; if without holy love, there must be a time when it begins to warm the heart.

The graces of the Spirit admit not of a progressive creation; love or enmity, penitence or impenitence, faith or unbelief, are the only positive conditions of the human mind. There is no state between them. There is and can be no such thing as love, or repentance, or faith, half formed, and progressive to a completion.

There are persons, however, of some seriousness, who seem desirous to approximate to evangelical belief on the subject of regeneration, who admit the necessity of a change in human character in some degree like that which we have described, only it is not wholly new, but the result of the progressive culture of the human powers by divine aid; and since on both sides, we believe, they say, in the necessity of holiness, what difference does it make whether it comes from old principles or new, or whether the work is instantaneous or progressive?

Whatever might be thought beforehand, the difference in experience between a belief in instantaneous or progressive regeneration is manifest and great. The latter assumes fallacious and dangerous views of human nature, as including some seed of virtue, or principle of light and life, which needs only cultivation to bring it up to the maturity of holiness; is

associated, also, with false views of holiness, as consisting in some nondescript, mystical goodness, which grows imperceptibly under culture, as the harvest rises under rain and sunshine.

It legitimates as virtues, efficacious to save, all those grounds of fallacious hope which I have already named,—quelling fear, preventing a sense of sin, and creating hope built upon the sand.

It produces, likewise, and fosters, and makes obstinate, a self-righteous and self-complacent, self-justifying spirit; while it creates hostility to the fundamental doctrines of the Gospel,—the entire depravity of man, the necessity of a radical change of character, and acquiescence in the discriminations of divine justice and mercy, in the punishment or renovation and pardon of sinful men.

And, worst of all, its tendency on communities is to cause prejudice and virulent hostility, not only against the doctrines of the Bible, but against revelation itself; and to produce ultimately scepticism and rank infidelity, and scoffing at the Bible and the work of the Spirit.

3. THE EFFECTUAL MEANS OF REGENERATION IS THE WORD OF GOD. By effectual means, I understand the means which God employs and renders efficient in producing the change. That he accomplishes the change by his mighty power associated with means, is the unequivocal testimony of the Bible and the Confession of Faith. Chosen to salvation the elect of God are, through sanctification of the Spirit and belief of the truth whereunto he called them *by the Gospel*. The Gospel is denominated “the power of God and the wisdom of God unto salvation.” “The law of the Lord is perfect, converting the soul.” “The word of God is quick and powerful.” “The seed is the word.” “Being born again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, by the word of

God; and this is the word which by the Gospel is preached unto you." "Ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free." "Sanctify them through thy truth. Thy word is truth." "Seeing ye have purified your souls in obeying the truth through the Spirit." "They shall be taught of God." "I drew them with the cords of love." "No man can come unto me, except the Father which hath sent me draw him." "Every one, therefore, which hath heard and learned of the Father, cometh unto me."

This is only a small portion of the phraseology of the Bible which associates God's efficiency with his word, in regeneration. That such instrumentality should, in direct terms, and by every variety of metaphor, be associated with the power of God in regeneration, if in fact no such instrumentality is employed, cannot be assumed without shaking the foundation of all confidence in the teaching of the Bible. Exposition may as well be abandoned; for nothing, in that case, can be taught by language, which theory and imagination might not explain away. We might as well deny that God is the efficient cause, as that truth is the "effectual means" of regeneration. But there is no necessity for denying either, and no authority for stripping either class of texts of their natural and obvious import, to mean nothing. What would be thought of the expositor who should insist that because men are begotten again by the *word*, therefore the *power* of God is not concerned in regeneration, and that it is all a matter of moral suasion and human endeavor? But why should the efficiency of God defraud the word of its alleged instrumentality, or the instrumentality of the word exclude the power of God? Is the union of both impossible? It cannot be impossible, because, unquestionably, in the government of the natural world, God's almightiness is associated with the in-

strumentality of natural causes, and may be just as possibly, if God pleases, in the moral world, associated with the instrumentality of moral causes.

To what purpose are laws, and institutions, and the preaching of the Gospel, if God does nothing and can do nothing by their instrumentality? Are laws, and institutions, and the ministry of reconciliation, only the empty attendant symbols of God's power? Does it correspond with the usage of revealed language, to ascribe instrumentality to the impotent signals and attendants of God's agency? Is it ever said that God inflicted the plagues of Egypt by Aaron's rod, or threw down the walls of Jericho by rams' horns? The analogy of scriptural use forbids the ascription of instrumental agency to the mere symbols of the presence and power of God. Nor have I been able to find any declaration in the Bible that God regenerates by his own almighty power, without any instrumental agency. The Scriptures teach abundantly that God is the author of regeneration, and that it is the instantaneous effect of his omnipotence, applied with a direct design to produce it; but the fact that he does it, and that it is an illustrious act of omnipotence, does not decide *how he does it*, much less that he does it by power only, without means; while all the passages which speak of the instrumentality of the word prove that he does not regenerate by omnipotence alone, but by power associated with the reading, and especially the preaching, of the word.

With this view of the subject correspond all the implications of the Bible. If the Gospel possesses no adaptation to secure in any way, as a means in the hand of God, the renovation of the heart, whence the transcendent excellence and importance attached to it, and the high perniciousness and criminality of error, and why is the almighty power of God

manifest only in alliance with revelation? Is the truth of God a mere arbitrary association of particular opinions with particular acts of God's power? It cannot be. The testimony of the Bible is express the other way.

There is, however, in our Church, no need of controversy on the subject, and no room for it.

It is not claimed that God regenerates by the truth without an interposition of the exceeding greatness of his own power; and, without denying the Confession and Catechisms, it cannot be denied that what is accomplished in effectual calling is accomplished by his word and Spirit.

That God is able by his direct immediate power to approach the mind in every faculty, and to touch all the springs of action and affection, I have never denied or doubted. And that he is able by the direct interposition of his power so to rectify the mind of man, as disordered by the fall, as that the consequence would be the immediate, unperverted exercise of the will and affections in obedience, is just as evident as that God can create minds in such a condition that they will in these respects go right from the beginning; and that in this manner he does retrieve the consequences of the fall, in respect to those who die in infancy, would seem to be as evident as that he saves them at all. That he is able, also, if it seemed good in his sight, to reveal the truth and manifest himself savingly to the heathen, is as plain as that he could reveal the same truths to holy men of old, and make them effectual through a written word and established ordinances. Nor is it denied or doubted, in respect to POSSIBILITY, that God, if it seemed wisest and best under the Gospel, might make such manifestations of himself to the souls of men, attended by such energy of his almighty power, as would call them unfailingly into his kingdom.

The question, as we have said, is not a question of possible or impossible, but a question of FACT, as to the manner in which God does actually call effectually sinners into his kingdom,—a question of wisdom and goodness in doing what is best in the best manner.

I have no sympathy for the opinion that it depends on sinners whether they be regenerated or not in the day of his power, or that God does all he can, and leaves the event of submission or not to rebel man,—and that sinners make themselves to differ, and are in fact the self-determining authors of their own regeneration. The passages quoted to prove such an assertion are misunderstood and perverted.

The texts,—“What could I have done more for my vineyard that I have not done in it?” and “he could not do many mighty works there, because of their unbelief,” and other kindred passages, do not teach that God is ever efficaciously resisted by any sinner whom he attempts to subdue, or that there is any sinner on earth so stubborn and obstinate that God could not reconcile him if it seemed good in his sight. The limitation is of God’s unerring wisdom,—and the “cannot” the same as when it is said he cannot deny himself, or cannot lie, or where God himself says, “Though Moses and Samuel stood before me, yet my mind could not be towards this people.”

The question, also, has respect not to extreme cases, but to the ordinary methods of his sovereign power in saving men; and here the Bible and Confession are express, that regeneration is accomplished by the word and Spirit of God.

Most assuredly it is the grammatical import and obvious meaning, and no doubt the true intent of our Confession and Catechisms, that what God accomplishes in effectual calling

he accomplishes by his word and Spirit,—effectually calls “*by his word and Spirit*” out of that state of sin and death in which men are by nature. *By his word and Spirit* enlightening their minds savingly to understand the things of God. *By his word and Spirit* taking away the heart of stone and giving a heart of flesh. *By his word and Spirit and almighty power* renewing their wills, and determining them to that which is good. *By his word and Spirit* inviting and drawing sinners to Christ, yet so as they come most freely, being made willing by his grace. The Spirit of God maketh the reading, and especially the preaching of the word, an effectual means of convincing of sin and converting sinners, and building them up in holiness and comfort through faith unto salvation.” How can that be an effectual mean of conversion which does nothing, and only attends the display of God’s omnipotence?

Is it demanded how God can make the word effectual by his Spirit in regeneration? I am not sure that the Bible, or the creeds, or standard writers, have explained exactly how the Spirit regenerates by the word, or that I shall be able to do justice to the representations which they have made. It is evident, however, that by “THE WORD” and “THE TRUTH” is meant the whole revelation which God has made to man: including all the truths, motives, and ordinances of the Bible, and all the illustrative and corroborating influence of his providential government; comprehending the being, the attributes, the character, and the eternal counsel and law of God, the fall and total depravity of man, the developments of the Trinity, and plan of redemption by Jesus Christ; including his divine person, mediation, atonement, and the terms upon which justification and eternal life are offered, and the ordinances and means of commending these overtures

of mercy to the consciences and hearts of men; including also the Spirit, his divine person, and work of revelation, illumination and restraint, awakening and convincing, converting and sanctifying sinful men, to make them meet for heaven; and also the mingled influence of majesty and condescension, justice and mercy, and all the promises and threatenings, and hopes and fears, attendant upon the discriminations of grace and justice, of death and judgment and eternity, associated with heaven and hell, according to the characters formed, and the deeds done in the body.

Now, it is admitted by all orthodox creeds and writers that there is a work preparatory and consequential to regeneration, which the Spirit does accomplish by the instrumentality of the word. It is called before regeneration common grace; and after, sanctification. Nor is it difficult to see the adaptation of the word to the requisite preparatory work. The thing to be accomplished in regeneration is the restoration of the vagrant will and affections from the creature to the Creator,—the turning from broken cisterns to God, the fountain of good. To accomplish this, the character and law of God need to be understood, the sinner's attention arrested, his sensibilities quickened, his conscience invigorated, and his sins set in order before him by the coming of the commandment; and it is easy to see how the word is powerful in its adaptation after regeneration, to sanctify and fit believers for heaven. The Psalmist celebrates it as "right, rejoicing the heart,"—"pure, enlightening the eyes;" and our Saviour, in his intercessory prayer for his disciples and people in all ages, prays, "Sanctify them through thy truth,—thy word is truth."

The only question is, whether God, by his Spirit, makes the word as effectual to regenerate as he does to prepare the

way, and to sanctify after regeneration. And is it a thing intuitively impossible that God, according to the language of our Confession and Catechisms, should be "pleased, in his appointed and accepted time, effectually to call the predestinated by his word and Spirit out of a state of sin and death, in which they are by nature, to grace and salvation by Jesus Christ; by his word and Spirit enlightening their minds spiritually and savingly, to understand the things of God, taking away their heart of stone, and giving unto them a heart of flesh; renewing their wills, and by his almighty power determining to that which is good, and effectually drawing them to Christ, yet so as they come freely, being made willing by his grace; in his accepted time, inviting and drawing them to Christ by his word and Spirit; — the Spirit of God making the reading, but especially the preaching of the word, an effectual mean of convincing and converting sinners, and of building them up in holiness and comfort through faith unto salvation"? Our standards, you perceive, are unequivocal in the declaration that regeneration itself, as well as conviction and sanctification, is accomplished by the word and Spirit of God. It ascribes expressly the same instrumentality to the word, in regeneration, which it ascribes to it in conviction and sanctification. This, so far as I can judge, has been the prevalent doctrine of the Church of God in every age. Indeed, it was one of the points of earnest controversy between Papist and Protestant: the one mystifying about the internal word, as a pretext for the sequestration of the Bible, the other asserting its instrumentality. Should the question be pressed, how the Spirit makes the word effectual in regeneration, the answer is:

Not by the truth and motives of the word, as God employs natural causes to produce their effects. It is said expressly

in our Confession that he does not force the will, or determine it to good by any absolute necessity of nature, but that he doth persuade and enable men to embrace Jesus Christ freely offered to them in the Gospel.

The mind is not a material substance, nor the means of its unperturbed action natural causes; and to clothe the word in the hand of the Spirit, with the power of a natural cause, from imagery borrowed from the natural world, is to materialize both the word and the soul. The heart is not literally a stone; nor the word of God a sword, or fire, or hammer, to break or melt the stony heart. The meaning is that the Spirit somehow, by the word, both wounds and heals the soul; not as he would wound the body by a spear, and heal it by surgical application,—but he does it by an instrumentality which may be fitly represented by such metaphorical analogies.

The Bible contains precisely that balanced exhibition of God,—of the riches of his goodness, his majesty and his condescension, his love and his justice, his mercy and his inexorable decision to punish the incorrigible, his long-suffering and sudden vengeance,—and so exhibits the glorious and dreadful discriminations of his justice and his grace, as makes it as perfect in its adaptation when brought home to the mind and heart to induce submission, as the commandment, when commanded by the Spirit, is to produce conviction, or the same exhibition made real by divine illumination to sanctify the believer; but sin has darkened the mind, and the god of this world, and the sinner's own deceitful heart of enmity, *keep out this exhibition* as a matter of living reality, so that the natural man understandeth not, by his own or any human endeavor, the things of the kingdom of God. But, as the Spirit commends the law to the sinner's conscience in

conviction of sin as man cannot, and sanctifies by the truth his regenerated people, so "all those whom God hath predestinated unto life, and those only, he is pleased, in his appointed and accepted time, effectually to call, by his word and Spirit, out of that state of sin and death in which they are by nature, to grace and salvation by Jesus Christ; enlightening their minds spiritually and savingly to understand the things of God, taking away their heart of stone, and giving unto them a heart of flesh; renewing their wills, and by his almighty power determining them to that which is good; and effectually drawing them to Jesus Christ; yet so as they come most freely, being made willing by his grace." It is all dark to the sinner, and mournful and terrible, till the Spirit makes the Gospel a reality instinct with life.

Nor is it the *letter*, the simple naked *truth* as a mere matter of intellectual perception, which becomes effectual, even in the hand of God. Facts and propositions do not contain and exhibit the whole truth contained in the Bible. It is a depository of divine feeling, from which flows the copious tide of God's love and hatred, his compassion and his justice, his mercy and his wrath,—the meltings of his heart, the terrors of his power, and the energy of his will. All the reality of divine feeling is expressed in the Bible; but the natural man understandeth it not,—he reads the letter only which killeth. But it is the Spirit which giveth life, "the words that I speak unto you they are spirit and they are life," manifesting the truth and reality of divine feeling to the soul. While the sinner reads with darkened mind the sacred page, the Spirit makes it luminous, and quick, and powerful,—it is as if written upon transparencies with invisible ink,—unseen and unfelt, till the illumination of the Spirit throws it out in letters of fire.

Then the heavens illuminated declare the glory of God, and the inspired page shines with overpowering splendor. Both these united manifestations of the works and word of God are celebrated in the 19th Psalm :

The heavens declare the glory of God, and the firmament showeth his handiwork. Day unto day uttereth speech, and night unto night showeth knowledge. There is no speech nor language where their voice is not heard. Their line is gone out through all the earth, and their words to the end of the world. In them hath he set a tabernacle for the sun ; which is as a bridegroom coming out of his chamber, and rejoiceth as a strong man to run a race. His going forth is from the end of the heaven, and his circuit unto the ends of it : and there is nothing hid from the heat thereof. The law of the Lord is perfect, converting the soul ; the testimony of the Lord is sure, making wise the simple ; the statutes of the Lord are right, rejoicing the heart ; the commandment of the Lord is pure, enlightening the eyes.

In accordance with these views of the proper instrumentality of the word in regeneration, is the testimony of Augustine, as quoted by Knapp :

With respect to the manner in which saving grace operates, Augustin believed that in the case of those who enjoy revelation, grace commonly acts by means of the word, or the divine doctrine, but sometimes *directly* ; because God is not confined to the use of means. On this point there was great logomachy. — *Knapp's Theology*, vol. II. p. 457.

To the same purpose is the exposition by Calvin of Hebrews 4 : 12 : “ For the word of God is quick, and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart.”

It is to be observed that the apostle is here speaking of the word of God which is brought to us by the ministry of men. For these imaginations are silly and even pernicious, to wit, that the internal word, indeed, is efficacious, but that the word which proceeds from the mouth of man is dead and

destitute of all effect. I confess, truly, that its efficacy does not proceed from the tongue of man, nor reside in the word itself, but that it is owing entirely to the Holy Spirit ; nevertheless this is no objection to the idea that the Spirit puts forth his power in the preached word. For God, since he does not speak by himself, but by men, sedulously insists on 'this, lest his doctrine should be received contemptuously, because men are its ministers. Thus Paul, when he calls the Gospel the power of God (Rom. 1 : 16), purposely dignifies his preaching with this title, because he saw that it had been slandered by some and despised by others. Moreover, when he calls the word *living*, its relation to men is to be understood, as appears more clearly in the second epithet ; for he shows what this life is, when he then calls it *efficacious* ; for it is the design of the apostle to show what the use of the word is in respect to us.

The words rendered *living* and *efficacious* in the above paragraph are in the English version translated *quick* and *powerful*.

The following is the comment of Calvin on Romans 10 : 17 : " So, then, faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God."

This is a remarkable passage concerning the efficacy of preaching, since it testifies that faith proceeds from it. He, indeed, confessed just before that it accomplished no good by itself ; but where it pleases the Lord to work, this is the instrument of his power. God by the voice of man acts efficaciously, and by his ministry creates faith in us. In this manner that Papal phantasm of implicit faith, which separates faith from the word, falls to the ground.

The Synod of Dort is unequivocal also in the doctrine of effectual calling by the word and Spirit.

What, therefore, neither the light of nature nor the law could do, *that* God performs by the power of the Holy Spirit, through the word, or the ministry of reconciliation ; which is the Gospel concerning the Messiah, by which it hath pleased God to save believers, as well under the Old as under the New Testament. — *Scott's Synod of Dort*, p. 137.

But in like manner, as by the fall man does not cease to be man, endowed with intellect and will, neither hath sin, which has pervaded

the whole human race, taken away the nature of the human species, but it hath depraved and spiritually stained it ; so even this divine grace of regeneration does not act upon men like stocks and trees, nor take away the proprieties (or properties, *proprietaes*) of his will, or violently compel it while unwilling ; but it spiritually quickens (or vivifies), heals, corrects, and sweetly, and at the same time powerfully inclines it : so that whereas before it was wholly governed by the rebellion and resistance of the flesh, now prompt and sincere obedience of the Spirit may begin to reign. — *Ibid.* p. 141.

But in the same manner as the omnipotent operation of God, whereby he produces and supports our natural life, doth not exclude but require the *use of means*, by which God in his infinite wisdom and goodness sees fit to exercise this his power, so this fore-mentioned supernatural power of God by which he regenerates us in nowise excludes or sets aside the use of the Gospel, which the most wise God hath ordained as the seed of regeneration and the food of the soul. Wherefore, as the apostles, and those teachers who followed them, have piously instructed the people concerning this grace of God, in order to his glory and to the keeping down of all pride, in the mean time neither have they neglected (being admonished by the holy Gospel) to keep them under the exercise of the word, the sacraments, and discipline : so, then, be it far from us, that teachers or learners in the Church should presume to tempt God, by separating those things which God, of his own good pleasure, would have most closely united together. For grace is conferred through admonitions, and the more promptly we do our duty, the more illustrious the benefit of God, who worketh in us, is wont to be, and the most rightly doth his work proceed. To whom alone all the glory, both of the means and their beneficial fruits and efficacy, is due for everlasting. Amen. — *Ibid.* p. 142.

WITSIUS, a standard writer in the Church, says :

Regeneration is that supernatural act of God whereby a new and divine life is infused into the elect, — persons spiritually dead, — and that from the incorruptible seed of the word of God made fruitful by the infinite power of the Spirit.

WITHERSPOON, one of the best standard writers in our Church, and whose treatise on regeneration is the best written and the most judicious, scriptural, copious, accurate, and

experimental dissertation upon that subject in the English language, speaking of the nature of regeneration, says :

As, therefore, the change is properly of a moral or spiritual nature, it seems to me properly and directly to consist in these two things : 1. That our supreme and chief end be to serve and glorify God, and that every other aim be subordinate to this. 2. That the soul rest in God as its chief happiness, and habitually prefer his favor to every other enjoyment. — p. 137.

The following passages imply the associated influence of means :

The deplorable and naturally helpless state of sinners doth not hinder exhortations to them in Scripture, and, therefore, takes not away their obligation to duty. See an address, where the strongest metaphors are retained, the exhortation given in these very terms, and the foundation of the duty plainly pointed out. “Wherefore he saith, Awake, thou that sleepest, and arise from the dead, and Christ shall give thee light.” From which it is very plain that the moral inability under which sinners now lie, as a consequence of the fall, is not of such a nature as to take away the guilt of sin, the propriety of exhortations to duty, or the necessity of endeavors after recovery.

But what shall we say ? Alas ! the very subject we are now speaking of affords a new proof of the blindness, prejudice and obstinacy, of sinners. They are self-condemned, for they do not act the same part in similar cases. The affairs of the present life are not managed in so preposterous a manner. He that ploughs his ground and throws in his seed cannot so much as unite one grain to the clod ; nay, he is not able to conceive how it is done. He cannot carry on, nay, he cannot so much as begin, one single step of this wonderful process toward the subsequent crop, — the mortification of the seed, the resurrection of the blade, and gradual increase, till it come to perfect maturity. Is it, therefore, reasonable that he should say, “I, for my part, can do nothing ? It is, first and last, an effect of divine power and energy. And God can as easily raise a crop without sowing as with it, — in a single instant, and in any place, as in a long time, by the mutual influence of soil and season ; I will therefore spare myself the hardship of toil and labor, and wait with patience, till I see what he will be pleased to send.” Would this be madness ? Would it be

universally reputed so? And would it not be equal madness to turn the grace of God into licentiousness? Believe it, the warning is equally reasonable and equally necessary in spiritual as in temporary things. — pp. 134, 135.

The authority of Owen is among the best of Orthodox authorities. His language is as follows :

We grant that in the work of regeneration the Holy Spirit towards those that are adult doth make use of the word, both the law and the Gospel, and the ministry of the Church, in the dispensation of it, as the ordinary means thereof; yea, this is ordinarily the whole external means that is made use of in this work, and an efficacy proper unto it, it is accompanied withal.

The power which the Holy Ghost puts forth in our regeneration is such, in its acting or exercise, as our minds, wills and affections, are suited to be wrought upon, and to be affected by it, according to their natures and natural operations. “Turn thou me, and I shall be turned; draw me, and I shall run after thee.” He doth neither act in them any otherwise than they themselves are meet to be moved and move, to be acted and act, according to their own nature, power and ability. He draws us with “the cords of a man.” And the work itself is expressed by persuading — “God persuade Japhet;” and alluring — “I will allure her into the wilderness and speak comfortably;” — for, as it is certainly effectual, so it carries no more repugnancy unto our faculties than a prevalent persuasion doth. So that he doth not, in our regeneration, possess the mind with any enthusiastical impressions, nor acteth absolutely upon us as he did in extraordinary prophetic inspirations of old, where the *minds and organs of the bodies of men were merely passive instruments, moved by Him above their own natural capacity and activity, not only as to the principle of working, but as to the manner of operation.*

He therefore offers no violence or compulsion unto the will. This that faculty is not naturally capable to give admission unto. If it be compelled, it is destroyed. — *Owen’s Works*, vol. II. p. 371.

Howe is equally express on this subject. He says :

And whereas, therefore, in this work there is a communication and participation of the divine nature, this is signified to be his divine power.

If you look to 2d Peter 2 : 3, 4, compared, "According as his divine power hath given us all things appertaining to life and godliness, through the knowledge of Him that hath called us to glory and virtue ; whereby are given to us exceeding great and precious promises ; that by these you might be partakers of the divine nature." Here is a divine nature to be communicated and imparted in this great and glorious work. How is it to be communicated ? It is true it must be by apt and suitable means, — to wit, by the great and precious promises given us in the Gospel. But it must be by the exertion, too, of a divine power. Though God do work suitably to an intelligent nature when he works upon such subjects, yet he works also suitably to himself, "according as his divine power hath given us all things pertaining to life and godliness," or to the godly life, in order to the ingenerating the godly life his divine power hath given us by the exceeding great and precious promises, a divine nature. The instrumentality and subserviency of these "exceeding great and precious promises" is greatly to be considered, God working herein suitably to the nature of an intelligent subject. Here is a change to be wrought in his nature.—a nature that is corrupt, depraved, averse from God, alienated from the divine life ; this nature is now to be attempered to God, made suitable to him, made propense and inclined towards him. This might be done, it is true, by an immediate exertion of almighty power, without any more ado. But God will work upon men suitably to the nature of man. And what course doth he therefore take ? He gives "exceeding great and precious promises," and in them he declares his own good will, that he might win theirs. In order to the ingenerating grace in them, he reveals grace to them by these great and precious promises. And what is grace in us ? Truly grace in us is good will towards God, or good nature towards God, which can never be without a transformation of our vicious, corrupt nature. It will never incline towards God, or be propense towards God, till he make it so by a transforming power. But how doth he make it so ? By discovering his kindness and goodness to them in "exceeding great and precious promises," satisfying and persuading their hearts, — "I mean nothing but kindness towards you, why should you be unkind towards me ? I am full of good will towards you ; will you requite it with perpetual ill will and everlasting enmity towards me ?" Thus the "*exceeding great and precious promises*" are instruments to the communicating a divine nature to us, though that divine nature be ingenerated by a mighty power. God doth work at the rate of omnipotency in the matter, by the exertion of almighty power, but yet suitably to our nature, so as to express his

mind, and kind design, and good will, by the exceeding great and precious promises contained in the Gospel.

And if it were not so, he might as well make use of any other means as the Gospel to work upon souls by. But the Gospel is the word of his grace.

There would seem to be the same evidence of instrumental action of the word as employed by the Spirit, which attends and evidences the direct efficacy of natural causes. How do we learn the existence and power of natural causes? We see not power itself, and infer it only from the uniformity with which the effect follows the application of the cause. It never exists without it, and always attends its application. But the same evidence of instrumental influence attends the ministration of the word of God. As a general fact, no spiritual life commences in its absence, and always in some form of association with its presence; and whatever may be the theory of ministers on the subject, they all pray at the close of their sermons that God would make his word effectual, clothe it with power, make it quick and powerful. The fire and the hammer to break, and melt, and purify the heart.

Is the question still repeated, *How* does God make the word effectual in regeneration by his Spirit? That question belongs not to me, but to the Lord of the Bible; and has been long since asked of him, and answered by him. Nicodemus saith unto him, "How can these things be?" And the answer was, "The wind bloweth where it listeth, and thou hearest the sound thereof, but canst not tell whence it cometh, and whither it goeth; so is every one that is born of the Spirit."

Does it seem to any to be impossible that God should savingly enlighten by his word and Spirit, and make "the reading, and especially the preaching of his word, an effectual mean of conviction and conversion"? It should be remem-

bered, that many things are possible with God, which seem impossible to men. That our philosophy is not the counsel of his will, according to which he worketh all things; nor our capacity of comprehension the limit of God's almighty power. Where the lamp of our reason goes out, and far beyond what eye hath seen or heart conceived, he holds on his eternal way in the great deep, and amid clouds and darkness, impenetrable to created mind. But in this unexplored and deep darkness, that he does a thing is the highest possible evidence of its rectitude, and that he has said a thing the highest possible evidence of its truth. On the ground, then, of divine declaration, we rest our confidence that God can make his word and Spirit an effectual means of the conviction and conversion of sinners.

4. WHY IS THE POWER OF GOD NECESSARY TO REGENERATION? Why may not argument and motive prevail on men to turn to God?

The power of God is not necessary because the will of man is forced, or by any absolute necessity of nature determined to evil. But it is necessary because the bias to actual sin occasioned by the fall is such as eventuates in a perverse decision of the will and affections in respect to the chief good, inducing the preference of the creature to the Creator; and because, when this perverse decision is once made, the heart is fully set and incorrigible to all motive, and immutable in its way,—to which is to be added, the power of habit resulting from the repetition of evil desire, and purpose, and gratification; and though altogether they force not the will, nor decide it wrong by an absolute necessity of nature, or cancel obligation, or afford excuse, they do, nevertheless, render all means and efforts abortive which are not made effectual by the special influence of the Holy Spirit.

During this aberration of the will and affections from God, there is nothing remaining to man which, by any possible culture, can become religion.

No emotions of the sublime, in view of the majesty of God, which become adoration : no admiration of the adaptation of his character and laws to good results, or of the Gospel to sustain law and recover the lost, which produce holy complacency : no delicacy of taste, or tenderness of sensibility, which will expand and amplify into love : no pleasure in doing good rather than evil, which, by culture, can be made benevolence, embracing God with supreme and his subjects with impartial good will : no patriotism which can be kindled into piety ; and none of the natural affections which unite in tender ties the family, which become cords of love to draw back the heart from the creature to God : no amiableness and good nature, which inspire evangelical self-denial for Christ's sake ; and no piety which so extends beyond the sphere of the senses as to feel for the sorrows of the soul, and the woes of eternity : no power of intellect or urgency of conscience, or fear of punishment, as will ever in the order of cause and effect eventuate in godly sorrow ; nor is there any power of institutions or of doctrine, or argument or eloquence, which ever enlightens savingly the dark mind, or wakes up the pulse of life in the dead soul. As I have said in my sermon on the native character of man, the discourse in which the chief evidence of my Pelagianism is supposed to be contained,—“ All which is admirable in intellect, or monitory in conscience, or comprehensive in knowledge, or refined in taste, or delicate in sensibility, or powerful in natural affection, may be found in man as the result of constitution, or the effect of intellectual and moral culture : but religion is not found, except as the result of a special divine interposition. The temple is beautiful,

but it is a temple in ruins; — the divinity is departed, and the fire on the altar is extinct.”

It follows, therefore, that except a man be born again,— be born from above, be born of the Spirit, be born of God,— he cannot see the kingdom of God.

But I pass on to the next charge —

CHARGE III. — OF PROPAGATING A DOCTRINE OF PERFECTION, &c. (Vide page 88).

On this subject it will not be necessary to go into any extended analysis. The subject in discussion is that of evangelical obedience, and the ability of the sinner to render it. I do teach that a sinner is *able* to render such obedience as the Gospel requires, and that so far as God renders him *willing* he is perfect. But my sermon nowhere teaches that God does actually render him willing to keep all his commandments. I know that to effect this nothing is needful but that the sinner should be willing; and where once he is so, all obstacle is removed. If my language in the sermon does convey the idea that a sinner is ever so rendered willing that he keeps the entire will of God, I conveyed that which I did not mean. And Dr. Wilson knows that this is and must be so; for he has himself admitted that he does not believe that I hold the doctrine of the Perfectionists. But what do I say?

Indeed, to be able and unwilling to obey God, is the only possible way in which a free agent can become deserving of condemnation and punishment. So long as he is able and willing to obey, there can be no sin; and the moment the ability of obedience ceases, the commission of sin becomes impossible. — p. 22.

What, then, when he moves on to that work of sovereign mercy which no sinner ever resisted, and without which no one ever submitted to God, what does he do? When he pours the daylight of omniscience upon the soul, and comes to search out what is amiss, and put in order that which is out of the way, what impediment to obedience does he find to be removed,

and what work does he perform? He finds only the will perverted, and obstinately persisting in its wicked choice; and in the day of his power all he accomplishes is to make the sinner willing. — p. 31.

Both passages respect willingness to obey the Gospel, and have no reference to a perfect obedience of the moral law.

What, then, is the evidence that I propagate a doctrine of Perfection? 1. That I teach the doctrine of man's natural ability as a free agent to obey the Gospel. 2. That this doctrine tends to the doctrine of Perfection. 3. That the Perfectionists claim Dr. Beecher as being on their side. 4. That some young man somewhere has written a letter to Theodore Weld with a view to convert him to Perfectionism. 5. That I have warned the students against the doctrine of Perfection.

Dr. Wilson *knows* that this is no evidence. But then he asserts that some of the students in Lane Seminary held those notions, and were Perfectionists in principle. Supposing they were,—does that prove that *I taught* the doctrine? There was a Hopkinsian student in Dr. Mason's Seminary, in New York,—does that prove that Dr. Mason was a Hopkinsian? But there is one fact, which has been proved on the subject, and into which Dr. Wilson ought to have inquired before he ventured to ring the bell of alarm, and that is, that there was not *one* Perfectionist in the seminary. Prof. Biggs and several of the students have been examined before you, and they expressly say that they do not know of a single young man in that institution who holds the Perfectionist notions; and all these, and especially my warning the students against the doctrine, are brought to prove that I propagate it!

Dr. Wilson says that ability and obligation, when brought together, imply absolute perfection. And so say the Perfectionists. But Dr. Wilson does himself great injustice, if he

says that there is no man but must be perfect, if he has the power of being so. That proposition assumes that every free agent does all that he is able to do ; so that, if you show that he is able to keep God's commandments, it proves that he *does* keep them.

I have proved that man is able to obey the commandments of God, whether in the Gospel or the law. But Dr. Wilson says, if so, then I hold that man is perfect ; because no free agent has ability, unless he does all that he is commanded to do.

[Dr. WILSON said that Dr. Beecher had admitted that so long as a man is both able and willing there can be no sin. Did he mean to refute his own argument ?]

Dr. BEECHER replied by asking whether all men who were able to pay their honest debts do always pay them ? and whether, if a man did not pay his debts, it follows that of course he was not able ? Did a miser give always according to his ability ? or is not a liar able to speak the truth ? Dr. Beecher said he was amazed at the argument of the Perfectionists, and still more that his brother Wilson should have classed himself with them.

But, said Dr. Beecher, another argument brought against me is that the heresies I have taught lead to the doctrine of Perfection, as their natural result. Dr. Wilson has conceded that he himself never supposed I meant to teach Perfection. But he affirms that I teach that from which others draw the doctrine of Perfection as an inference. Now, admitting the fact that they do draw such an inference, the question is whether they draw it logically,—whether my premises lead to any such conclusion ? And I have proved that they do not. Will Dr. Wilson affirm that a man holds and teaches whatsoever other men draw as inferences from his language ?

There were ignorant and unlearned men who perverted even the language of Paul. If a man's doctrine is to be tested by the use which heretical persons make of it, then Dr. Wilson himself is most certainly a heretic. For did not the Shakers claim him? and did not the New Lights claim him? They did; and insisted that, in maintaining their systems, they were only carrying out the principles which Dr. Wilson had laid down. Such a ground of charge will not do; it is a sword which cuts both ways.

Again, I am charged with preaching the doctrine of regeneration as accomplished by the truth. On a topic like this much might be said. I shall, however, content myself with saying but little. I have no theory to produce and descant upon; but shall refer simply to the Catechism and to the Bible. What says the Shorter Catechism?

Q. 89. How is the Word made effectual to salvation?

A. The Spirit of God maketh the reading, but especially the preaching of the Word, an effectual means of convincing and converting sinners, and of building them up in holiness and comfort, through faith, unto salvation.

And what says the Larger Catechism?

Q. 155. How is the Word made effectual to salvation?

A. The Spirit of God maketh the reading, but especially the preaching of the Word, an effectual means of enlightening, convincing and humbling sinners; of driving them out of themselves and drawing them unto Christ; of conforming them to his image, and subduing them to his will; of strengthening them against temptations and corruptions; of building them up in grace, and establishing their hearts in holiness and comfort through faith unto salvation.

And what says the Confession?

All those whom God hath predestinated unto life, and those only, he is pleased, in his appointed and accepted time, effectually to call, by his word and Spirit, out of that state of sin and death in which they are by nature, to grace and salvation by Jesus Christ; enlightening their minds

spiritually and savingly to understand the things of God ; taking away their heart of stone and giving unto them an heart of flesh ; renewing their wills, and by his almighty power determining them to that which is good ; and effectually drawing them to Jesus Christ ; yet so as they come most freely, being made willing by his grace. — Ch. x. sec. 1.

And now I beg leave to submit such quotations from the Bible as shall present the views that I entertain on this subject.

See Rom. 8 : 30 ; 11 : 10. Eph. 1 : 10, 11. 2 Thess. 2 : 13, 14. 2 Cor. 3 : 3, 6. Rom. 8 : 2. Eph. 2 : 1—5. 2 Tim. 1 : 9, 10. Acts 26 : 18. 1 Cor. 2 : 10, 12. Eph. 1 : 17, 18. Ezek. 36 : 26 ; 11 : 19. Phil. 2 : 13. Deut. 30 : 6. Ezek. 36 : 27. Eph. 1 : 19. John 6 : 44, 45. Cant. 1 : 4. Psal. 110 : 3. John 6 : 37. Rom. 6 : 16, 17, 18.

The whole matter turns upon this,—a thing which is done by instrumental agency cannot at the same time be done by direct agency, because it involves a contradiction. Now, our book says that regeneration is accomplished by the instrumentality of the Word of God, the Gospel of Christ ; and the Bible declares that men are begotten by the incorruptible seed of the Word ; and Paul declares that it is by the cross of Christ that he is crucified to the world. The Catechism and the Bible, therefore, both say that the saving change in man is accomplished by instrumentality ; and the charge against me implies that this is untrue. We both admit that it is God who converts ; but I say he converts men through his Word of truth, and Dr. Wilson says that he converts them by a direct agency, without any intervening instrumentality whatever. On account of this difference between us, he charges me with heresy. My answer is, to the law and to the testimony.

And, first, the subject does not require in its own nature the intervention of God's naked omnipotency. This, indeed, would be required, if an operation was to be performed in the

natural world. Matter can be moved in no other way. But, as the effect is a moral one, being none other than a change of an enemy into a friend, what is the instrumentality by which it is to be effected? Must not that be moral also? Why did Christ die? Why was his atoning blood put into the hand of the Spirit to be thrown by him upon hard-hearted man, that he may be subdued to love and obedience? Are these the means which God employs when he works a change in things material and natural? What should God employ to move a free agent, but the motives so abundantly contained in his own Word?

The charge assumes that he works this change without means of any kind. Now, I don't philosophize about the matter. Let them who do tell us how enemies are reconciled. It is not for me to say how God does this work. It is for God alone to tell. God says he does it by the Word; and the Catechism says he makes the Word an effectual means of doing it; and if the Word has done it, and has been effectual in doing it, then it is not done without the Word by direct power. If a thing cannot be done in two different ways at the same time, and it is known from good evidence that it is done in one way, then we know that it is not done in the other way. A tree cannot be cut down with an axe, and at the same time pushed down by the unaided strength of a man's hand. If he pushes it down, he does not cut it down; if he cuts it down, he does not push it down. And as God has said that he makes the preaching of the Gospel EFFECTUAL, no man may set aside God's testimony in order to introduce his own philosophy. This is my ground: it is not new divinity; and if it is heresy, I shall carry it out of the Church with me,—and yet I hope that I shall leave it in the Church too.

IV. ANOTHER CHARGE WHICH I AM TO ANSWER IS THAT OF HAVING SLANDERED THE WHOLE CHURCH OF GOD.— (p. 89.)

I charge Dr. Beecher with the sin of slander, namely :

SPECIFICATION 1. — In belying the whole church of God.

The Doctor's statements are these : "There is no position which unites more universally and entirely the suffrages of the whole human race than the necessity of a capacity for obedience to the existence of obligation and desert of punishment." Again : "The doctrine of *man's free agency* and natural ability, as the ground of obligation and guilt, has been the received doctrine of the Orthodox Church in all ages." — Sermon "Dependence and Free Agency," pp. 23 and 36.

SPECIFICATION 2. — In attempting to bring odium upon all who sincerely receive the standards of the Presbyterian Church, and to cast all the Reformers, previous to the time of Edwards, into the shade of ignorance and contempt.

Dr. Beecher says : "Doubtless the impression often made by their language (language of the Reformers) has been that of natural impotency ; and in modern days there may be those who have not understood the language of the Reformers, or of the Bible, on this subject ; and who verily believe that *both* teach that man has no ability, of any kind or degree, to do anything that is spiritually good, and that the rights of God to command and to punish survive the wreck and extinction in his subjects of the elements of accountability. Of such, if there be such in the church, we have only to say, than when, for the time, they ought to be teachers, they have need that some one should teach them which be the first principles of the oracles of God." — Sermon "Dependence and Free Agency," p. 41. Again :

"It must be admitted, however, that from the primitive age down to the time of Edwards, few saw this subject with clearness, or traced it with uniform precision and consistency. His appears to have been the mind that first rose above the mists which long hung over the subject." — p. 41. Again :

"So far as the Calvinistic system, as expounded by Edwards and the disciples of his school, prevailed, revivals prevailed, and heresy was kept back. And most notoriously it was 'dead orthodoxy' which opened the dikes, and let in the flood 'of Arminian and Unitarian heresy.'" By attending to the whole passage, page 48, same sermon, the Presbytery will see that "dead orthodoxy," as the Doctor calls it, was the doctrine of

man's natural impotency to obey the Gospel. — p. 48. The Doctor attempts to make us believe that, from the time of Edwards, the theory of this sermon has been, and now is, the received doctrine of the ministers and churches of New England. The truth of this I am not prepared to admit, bad as I think of the New England theologians in general ; but I am not prepared to deny it. Be it so, — the matter is so much the worse. Again the Doctor proceeds, in his strain of calumny, — “ Far the greater portion of the revivals of our land, it is well known, have come to pass under the auspices of Calvinism, as modified by Edwards and the disciples of his school, and under the inculcation of ability and obligation, and urgent exhortations of immediate repentance and submission to God ; while congregations and regions over which natural impotency and dependence, and the impenitent use of means, and waiting God's time, have disclosed their tendencies, have remained, like Egypt, dark beside the land of Goshen ; and like the mountain of Gilboa, on which there was no rain, nor fields of offering ; and like the valley of vision, dead, dry, very dry.” — p. 49.

And, to complete the climax, the Doctor adds : “ No other obstruction to the success of the Gospel is so great, as the possession of the public mind by the belief of the natural and absolute inability of unconverted men. It has done more, I verily believe, to wrap in sackcloth the Sun of Righteousness, and perpetuate the shadow of death on those who might have been rejoicing in his light, than all errors beside. I cannot anticipate a greater calamity to the church than would follow its universal inculcation and adoption. And most blessed and glorious, I am confident, will be the result, when her ministry everywhere shall rightly understand and teach, and their hearers shall universally admit, the *full ability* of every sinner to comply with the terms of salvation.” — p. 52.

Let the Presbytery compare all this with the history of the Church, and the doctrine of our standards on original sin, total depravity, the misery of the fall, regeneration, and effectual calling, and say whether there is an Arminian, or a Pelagian, or a Unitarian, in the land, who will not agree with Dr. Beecher, and admit “ the full ability of every sinner to comply with the terms of salvation,” and unite with him in considering it a calamity for the doctrines of our standards to be universally adopted !

But I rather think that such slander as this is not actionable. Men are usually prosecuted for slandering one another ; for speaking falsely of men above ground, not below ground ;

and the whole Church of God is not a living agent to be the object of slander. All that I have done is to state historical facts, according to my knowledge of history. And if in so doing I have ever fallen into error, it is not slander. If I have misread the documents left to us by the fathers, it is a mistake, but it is not slander. But I have proved the truth of my allegations with respect to the Church. I have shown that she holds, and has held in all ages, that man is a free agent, but lies in a condition of moral impotency; and I say that this is no slander on the Church, but the reverse. It is not to her discredit, but to her honor, that she believes the truth. If I had said that the Church held the doctrine of Fatalism, and had failed to prove it, that would have been a slander indeed. And now I ask whether Dr. Wilson's charity could not by any ingenuity have found out a more favorable construction to put upon my course? And even admitting that I had fallen into a mistake in stating what I believe to be true, could he not have found for my error a more brotherly name?

I have not slandered, then, the Church of God, in teaching that they held to the doctrine of man's natural ability as the foundation of his accountable agency, but have proved the truth of it, from Justin Martyr, A. D. 140, to Dr. Wilson's friend, Dr. Matthews, by an unbroken chain of historical extracts; while Dr. Wilson, by denying this, and assuming that they taught, as the doctrine of the Bible, that it requires no ability of any kind in fallen man to make him an accountable agent, and a subject of God's moral government, has deeply slandered them.

While on this subject of the imputation of Adam's sin to his posterity, he will seem to multitudes to have equally slan-

dered them by his following statements in this Presbytery. Dr. Wilson said :

Let us guard here against some mistakes. The doctrine of a union of representation does not involve in it the idea of personal identity. It does not mean that Adam and his posterity are the same identical persons. It does not mean that this act was personally and properly their act. Nor does it mean that the moral turpitude of Adam's sin was transferred to his descendants. The transfer of moral character makes no part of the doctrine of imputation.

DR. WILSON'S SOLE REMAINING CHARGE AGAINST ME IS THAT OF HYPOCRISY. The occasion of his preferring this was the refusal of Presbytery to institute an inquiry into the sentiments I held, on the ground of common fame. Being dissatisfied with that decision, he appealed to the Synod ; in which court I defended the course the Presbytery had pursued, denied the existence of that common fame which had been alleged to exist and to furnish ground of process against me, and openly avowed my faith in the Confession. It is in this avowal I am said to have acted hypocritically. The doctrines I held were as well known then as they are now ; and when I spoke of the Confession's containing the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth, my words are to be interpreted by the subject on which I was speaking, and are not to be taken out of the record and made to apply to something else which I was not talking about. The entire system of doctrine contained in the Confession was not the matter in dispute. The discussion had reference only to a few points of doctrine, concerning which I was charged with holding error. It is an irrefragable law of interpretation, that words spoken are to be understood in reference only to the matter concerning which they were uttered. Now, it was in reference to these particular doctrines that I said there had been a time when I could not

fully accord with the language of the Confession; but that since I had attended more fully to the subject, and had acquired more knowledge of the meaning of the terms employed as technics at the time the Confession was adopted,—terms now obsolete, but then well understood,—I had become convinced that instrument did contain the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth. I had no such thought as applying this language, rigidly, to the whole Confession, and every particular it contained; but I meant the remark in reference to the doctrines concerning which it was said my soundness was suspected; and they are doctrines of vital importance. With respect to these, I once more repeat the declaration, our Confession teaches the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth. If, indeed, some of its terms are taken in the meaning often attached to them at this day, it speaks error; but, receiving its language in the sense in which it is alleged the framers intended, it speaks the very truth.

Nor did I say this for the sake of making a flourish, and producing popular effect; and had the intercourse between myself and my brother Wilson been such as I am sorry to think it has not been,—had he felt the warm beatings of my heart, while he opened his own to me in return,—he would not have suspected me of such a manoeuvre. It has never belonged to my character, either here or anywhere else, to conceal my feelings and mask my sentiments. I always go heart first. But Brother Wilson seems to think that I go head first, and sometimes rather recklessly.

But suppose there is, on close examination, some discrepancy between my faith and the Confession,—does it necessarily follow that I see and hide it? That I have secret meanings, which I keep back from the public view? Is there no such thing possible as a mistake? And if a man thinks he agrees,

when he really differs, must he be a hypocrite? Do men never make mistakes who are admitted to be honest? And is it not within the range of possibility that the things which I hold to be in the Confession actually are in it; and that it is others who differ from it, and not I? Before Dr. Wilson can establish this charge, he must prove two things: first, what I said; and, secondly, that I was not, and could not be, honest in saying it. Has he proved them? Can he prove them? He has not proved them; but he has publicly made the charge; and I cannot but consider his course in this matter as unkind, unbrotherly and invidious. Christian charity hopeth all things, and believeth all things; and it never will admit the existence of sin in a brother, and especially a sin so odious as that of hypocrisy, till the proof is strong.

I have attempted to show that the Confession teaches man's natural ability as a free agent, and his moral inability as a fallen and lost sinner; that, on the subjects of original sin, including federal representation, the covenant with Adam and his posterity, the imputation of sin, the guilt of it, its punishment, and the original bias of our nature and will, I have taught nothing against the Confession of Faith. On the contrary, all that I have written and avowed on these subjects is in strict accordance with the Confession, with the views of the standard writers in the Church, and with the Bible. I have shown that my views of regeneration, by the special influence of the Spirit, and the instrumentality of truth, are expressed fully by the Larger and Shorter Catechisms, and by the article concerning effectual calling in the Confession. I do not deny, but admit, the interposition of the direct power of God, so far as it respects the bodily and natural powers of man, so far as these are calculated to impede his emancipation from sin. Whatever impediment may arise

from bodily habit or constitution, may be, and no doubt is, operated upon directly; and in these respects I never denied or disbelieved that an exertion of God's natural power, so far as it respects natural things, may be concerned in the work of man's regeneration. This I have always believed.

One more topic remains, to which I must solicit the attention of the Presbytery. Supposing that, in the explanations I have made, I shall not have succeeded in convincing all my brethren of my entire agreement with the Confession and the Bible as they understand both, still the discrepancy is not such as is inconsistent with the ends of Church fellowship, and an honest subscription to the Confession.

1. Similar differences have existed from the beginning. My position is this,—that a hair's breadth coincidence in each particular point never was made, or understood or intended to be made, a prerequisite condition of adopting the Confession. Nor has it ever been so in practice. The court has only to decide on one thing,—whether my differences, if I do differ, are such as to vacate the system, to put a sword into its vitals. If they are, then I ought to be put out of the Church forthwith. But, if they leave the system heart-whole, with all its great organization complete and untouched, and there is only a philosophical difference with respect to some of its parts, then I say, such differences have ever existed in the Church, and subscription to the Confession has never been understood as implying the contrary.

2. Differences have been so great that they did, at one time, produce a temporary separation between the Synods of New York and Philadelphia. These Synods were divided on what were then called new measures and new divinity, and in the heat of strife they remained apart for nine years; yet,

3. Without any change of opinion, or any relinquishment

of their respective peculiarities, they came together again, wept over all their divisions and alienations, and unkind and unbrotherly feelings towards each other, and adopted the Confession of Faith, with a declaration that a subscription to it implied no more than this,—that the subscriber believed it to contain the system of truth taught in the word of God. I ask, Did these Synods come together on the ground that the Confession contained the truth of God in the sense in which each understood it? Did they mean by mutual subscription to imply that there was an exact agreement as to their views in all things? Far from it. They came together with better religious views and feelings; they had found, by sad experience, that where contention is there is every evil work; and they mutually agreed to bury the hatchet, and walk together under that compromise which alone had first made our Church, and under which she had grown up in the enjoyment of unparalleled prosperity, and the brightest smiles of Heaven. And at this day the question is, whether a controversy which sundered the Church for nine years, and all whose fruits were wormwood and gall, shall be renewed, by making exact agreement in all things essential to the adoption of the common symbol; and whether those volcanic fires which have once rent the bosom of the Church shall now break forth anew, and burn with redoubled fury, desolating in all directions all that is good and fair?

That there have always existed diversities of sentiment, which, if pressed and insisted on, might have furnished ground of separation, I can show from various sources.

Three of the Presidents of Princeton College, namely, Edwards, Witherspoon and Davies, held to the doctrine of the new school on the subject of man's natural ability. These, it is admitted, were some of the most illustrious men that the

Church has ever been favored to possess; and yet they held that very point for which I am now to be turned out of the Church. I might add to the number the name of Samuel Stanhope Smith, for he agreed with them in this opinion. But I am not now in possession of the documentary proof necessary to establish this fact. Were these men charged with heresy? On the contrary, they are to this day eulogized in the highest strains by the very men who are now the champions of Orthodoxy in the Presbyterian Church. What man has more exactly or more fully stated the doctrines I hold on the subject of natural ability than Dr. Witherspoon, and yet who has been more extolled by Dr. Greene?

When Mr. Barnes was tried, Dr. Spring declared that he was ready to sink or swim with him; and yet, after that declaration, Dr. Spring has been sent by the voice of the General Assembly as their public and honored representative to the Churches of Europe. What, then, is the matter which makes that so bad in one man that he must be excommunicated, while it is so innocent in another that he may go all over the world, representing the Presbyterian Church of the United States? All that I hold is the old approved New England divinity,—it is that, and nothing else. And all the attempts which have been made to identify me with the New Haven school, as that is represented, are slander. There is nothing new in my creed; I learned it under Dr. Dwight; and my preaching is as sound as was the preaching of that illustrious man. If there is anything new in the school which has been named after Dr. Taylor, it has not *originated* or *changed* the faith I hold. I stand for myself, and for the Confession of Faith, and for the Bible; and all attempts to get a fog around another man, and then say that I believe the same as he does, are slanders. I protest against this

representative heresy; this plan of dressing somebody else with bear-skins, until you have made him an object of fear and horror, and then to cry out, "Dr. Beecher believes as he does." O! but Dr. Taylor is my friend, and that confirms it. Alas! is every man a heretic because his friend is unhappily falsely accused of heresy? I confess, without hesitation, that I don't believe Dr. Taylor is worthy of ecclesiastical disfranchisement. He would be, if he believed as some represent him to believe; but that is quite a different case. I have always refused to permit Dr. Taylor's opinions, or those of any other man, to be the representatives of mine; but I have as uniformly declared my disbelief of his *unsoundness in the faith*, and have refused to join the cry of heresy and denunciation. I hold the peculiar doctrines of the New England divinity, as they were taught fifty years ago, and respecting which Dr. Greene said that he had no objection to them, that he could get along with them very well. Nor was this the opinion of Dr. Greene alone. The General Assembly must have been of the same mind, for they laid down a plan of union and fellowship between the Presbyterian Church and the Churches of New England, and for a long time their delegates voted in each other's courts; and to this very hour you give these men the right hand of fellowship. Will it be said that their doctrines were not known? Their doctrines were published to the whole world, and were as well known then as they are now; and it was with a full knowledge of these doctrines that those Churches were admitted to correspondence. Can there be a stronger proof that the sentiments of the New England divines were not considered heretical?

I stand sheltered, therefore, by deliberate and reiterated decisions of the whole Presbyterian Church. I very well remember the commencement of that arrangement. The

younger Edwards, President of Union College, was at the head of the committee who reported a plan to the General Assembly, according to which ruling-elders and committee-men were allowed to sit side by side in the General Assembly itself. The object of the arrangement was the accommodation and comfort of that flood of emigrant piety which came pouring from New England, and settling down in the midst of Presbyterians, in all our new settlements. The distinction, which kept brother from brother, on account of a mere difference in ecclesiastical connections, weakened both, and impaired and often prevented their ability to support the Gospel among them. Remove the separating partition, allow them to unite, and they would both become strong. When the Presbyterian Church received these strangers into a union with herself, she perfectly well knew the materials she took, and what notions they held; and it is too late at this time of day to turn about and kick those out of the Church who had been received into it on a mutual agreement, when no change has taken place in their religious belief, and no stain is alleged against their moral character. Brethren may say, it was very wrong that they were admitted; it was a thing that ought never to have been done. Very well, you have a right to your own opinion on that question. But it *was* done; and now you must restrain your impatience, until it shall regularly and in an orderly manner be undone. But you are not to enact *ex post facto* laws, and hang men who came into your Church in obedience to laws then existing. Give us fair warning; take back your recognition; let us out unharmed, with as fair a character as we came in; and then, if any of us shall put his head in, catch him if you can. We are now in, and we came in on your own invitation. Now, does the Church of God invite heretics into her bosom, and

admit them to vote in her courts? Does she hold ministerial fellowship with heretics? Does she place heretical committee-men on the same bench with her own orthodox elders? It won't do. It is going too far. The Church has declared that what I hold is not heresy; and she has made the declaration in various ways, and in almost every possible form. Even the last Assembly refused to dissolve the existing alliance, and only recommended that no more Churches be formed on that plan. But here is Dr. Wilson's own letter. When he wrote it, he knew that I had held this doctrine, and he had no evidence that I had ever denounced it. And here is Dr. Miller's letter, who knew my sentiments perfectly, and, nevertheless, urged me vehemently to come to Philadelphia, to be a sort of pillar there, and, according to his own flattering representations, to exert a tranquillizing influence amid all their contentions, endeavoring to make me believe that I was the man, of all others, best calculated to accomplish that great work. Does Dr. Miller not know what is heresy? Would he persuade me to come and put my hand to the Confession of Faith against a good conscience? Never. I have, therefore, every possible proof that in embracing the Confession I have done that which the Church and the luminaries of the Church thought consistent with a godly sincerity.

As to Dr. Wilson, he had evidence of my heresy as far back as 1817. He had all that time to ponder upon it, and yet he united in calling me; and when I came at his call, met me with a back stroke. Now, if the Church is convinced of her error, and chooses to tighten her cords, and to exclude from her communion all who hold the original doctrines of the New England divines, free from all alleged admixtures, she certainly has a right to do it. She may, if she chooses, turn out all her New England children, after they have

done so much to build her walls, and extend her influence and power. But she has no right to make that a crime which she has herself legitimatized, and invited us to do, and never turned out any for doing. I will now draw my plea toward a close with some miscellaneous remarks.

This Western world is a great world; and it needs great influences to bring it out from the state of chaos which has grown from the mixed character of its population. It exhibits to the eye of the philosopher and the Christian an entirely new spectacle. Never till now was the scriptural prediction so near to a literal fulfilment, that a nation should be born in a day.

It is destined, and that very soon, to be the greatest of the nations; and its chief glory is, that God has established in it the principles of his truth, and seems to have selected it as a theatre on which to display their happiest effects. Nor is there any society of men whom God has favored and honored with opportunity to accomplish a greater work than the Presbyterian Church in these United States. This may be said with sober truth, and without any invidious comparison. And whatsoever she is able to do is most imperiously needed. The interests of this whole West, the interests of our nation and of the world, the interests of liberty and of religion, demand it at her hands. If the Presbyterian Church shall preserve harmony within her borders, if her ministers shall proceed on the ground of bearing and forbearing, there are no limits to the power which this, our beautiful and blessed Church, shall be able to send forth, to give strength and glory to the land. But, if she shall divide, woe's the day! — it may be like that day described in the Revelations, when those who have been enriched by her merchandise shall stand at a distance, and, beholding her burnings, cry out, Alas! alas! that

in one day so great riches should come to desolation. Look to it ! Brethren, a little precaution, a little kindness, a little of that charity which restored the two Synods to each other's fellowship, thereby laying the foundation for the Presbyterian Church, will carry us safely over this exigency, and make us a great and undivided people, terrible to God's adversaries as an army with banners.

But, should you choose an opposite course, to-morrow's sun may not have gone down before you may have cut asunder the cords of our unity and strength, and broken our Church up into fragments.

Mind is a difficult thing to associate with mind ; and when you have got them together, it is a difficult and a delicate thing to keep the union unbroken ; it is like broken bones, which are commencing to reünite,—one unguarded touch may, in a moment, sunder them again ; and that the Devil knows right well. Yet it is comparatively easy to keep men together who, by long habit, have been accustomed to march shoulder to shoulder. It is easy, in comparison, to keep onward with the stream of grace and the breathings of the Spirit ; but in an evil hour let the bonds of her unity be sundered, and then bring the Church together again if you can. Remember that she contains elements of strife such as were never before gathered together for the production of evil. Consider that there are within these United States notions and feelings which lead to nullification. Let that spirit once get into the Church, and let it cut off one great section of our communion, do you suppose the residue will long hold together ? If, indeed, we were only to be separated into two parts or three, and then could respectively abide in peace and quiet, the dismemberment might not be an event so deeply to be deplored ; nay, it would, perhaps, be advantageous, that the two sections

of the Church, between whom some unpleasant bickerings have taken place, should, like Abraham and Lot, agree to part their flocks, to preserve the general peace. But, alas ! it will not be so. Our Churches are all on the Presbyterian foundation. The heretical parties mutually denounced have it not in their power to say to each other, If you will go to the right, then we will go to the left ; or, if you prefer the left, then we will depart to the right. They are chained to the soil, and must continue to mingle together. We shall preach, and you will preach. One will claim the Church, and the other will claim the Church. The contention will grow sharper and sharper, the love of property mingling now in the strife, till there will be lawsuits in all directions. And then where will our hearts be ? Where will be the blessed influences of the Holy Spirit ? Where will be the work of missions ? Where will be our societies for education ? Where will be the rising institutions of the West, when all our strength, and all our property, and all our influence and power, have been wasted in mutual litigations and mutual revilings ? The devil will utter a scream of joy at a spectacle so worthy of his most earnest aspirations. He had begun to think that he must take leave of the West, that he must abandon his long-cherished hope of getting ultimate possession of this great and wide and fertile valley. But the news of the Sacramental Host of God's own people falling out and fighting with each other will heal his deadly wound, and bid all his hopes revive. No, brethren ; the Presbyterian Church cannot divide, without delaying the hour of her victory for more than half a century. If we witness that lamentable day, we must live and die in the midst of contentions ; and then, when we have sunk amidst the ruins of Christian char-

ity and the desolation of all our best hopes, our children may come up and finish the bad work which we have begun.

I have a word to address to you that respects my views of the Confession of Faith and discipline of the Presbyterian Church. It was asked, in a letter read by Dr. Wilson, who it was that got up a new Confession of Faith in New England? I cannot answer the question. But I can tell who put down that attempt. The scheme was got up, I believe, in Connecticut, and it was brought by the editor of the *Evangelist* before the General Association of Massachusetts, and I was the man who made successful opposition to it in that Association. I never lifted a hand to revise or improve the Confession of Faith; and I never shall do so, while I hold the doctrines of natural ability as true, and while I have found them useful in doing away the notions of fatality and Antinomianism. I have never preached them, except for a particular and definite purpose; just as a physician gives calomel to a patient in a fever, and when the fever is broken then administers bark and tonics. I have not gone on preaching my own views blindfold. But when I thought I had preached the doctrine of natural ability long enough to root out the opposite errors, then I have brought up the doctrine of moral dependence. And I challenge any one to find an Arminian in sentiment in any of those Churches to which it has been my privilege to minister. It is impossible to preach either the doctrine of free agency or dependence, prominently, for any length of time, and not have some men run away with one or the other into error. Dr. Wilson, for instance, preaches the doctrine of dependence, and there are some who say that he is a fatalist; and, if I am not misinformed, there are some of his hearers who push his system into absolute Antinomianism. Is Dr. Wilson to blame for this? Not at all; unless,

indeed, he omits to preach the doctrines which look the other way. Both are true, and both must be preached; and if one only is held up to view, the public mind will infallibly get a wrong impression. The proportion in which the two branches of the system are to be dwelt upon must depend upon circumstances. If a man goes where Antinomianism is prevalent, he must preach the doctrine of natural ability and free agency; on the contrary, if he is called to labor where Arminianism is rife, he must preach the doctrine of moral dependence. Let a man advocate whichever side of the controversy he chooses, and let him do it ever so judiciously and wisely, there will always be novices in the Church who will run his sentiments into extremes, and will be guilty of much extravagance.

I suppose that my opinions, when rightly understood, are very nearly the same as those of Dr. Wilson. Does he suppose that I am not sensible of the danger that must arise from carrying them to extremes? I am not insensible to it. I am as aware of danger as he can be. There will always be men who are incapable of discrimination; men half educated, full of zeal, but destitute of knowledge and prudence. Luther was vexed almost to death with such, and so am I, and so is Dr. Wilson. We should unite; we are united. While I preach natural ability, I do and always will preach moral dependence; and if I find any among my people who carry the doctrine to an extreme, I put the sword of the Spirit upon them. And if others carry matters to an extreme on the opposite side, then I turn about and fight them too. That is the stand which every minister is called to take. He is placed upon his watch-tower, that he may guard against the approach of danger alike in every direction. I am not so under the influence of a theory as to make everything yield

to that. My people know that I am not always banging their ears with the doctrine of natural ability. I alternate the two edges of the sword, and smite as to me seems good ; that I may guard my people on either side, and train them up to become perfect men in Christ Jesus. I think that in some parts of the Church enough has been said on the doctrine of natural ability. I thought so in Boston, and therefore I ceased from pressing those particular views. Dr. Woods said that I had rightly understood the type of the disease. I had done with the calomel, and it was time for the bark. I am aware that Asa Rand has said that the change was induced by other considerations. But he mistakes my motives. I hold that we are not to take a whole apothecary's shop of medicine and throw it upon the people at once, but that we are to administer it judiciously in measure, according to the state of the pulse. A stranger comes in, in the second stage of the disease, and sees the physician administering tonics, and goes away and makes a great outcry, and calls the doctor a quack, because he administers bark in a fever. He runs round among his acquaintance, and very sagely predicts that the patient will die ; he goes from house to house, and stirs up an excitement, that he may get the ignorant quack drummed out of town. And, after all, what does he prove ? Why, that he himself is a novice, and a busy-body, propagating slander. There is a point where bark is needed,—where laxatives must cease and tonics begin,—and it is the office of medical science to ascertain when that moment has arrived. I am as much afraid of having the doctrine of free agency in unskilful hands as Dr. Wilson is. I am as much afraid of tearing up the foundations of the Confession of Faith as he can be. If he will read my thoughts upon creeds, he will find that I am as much attached

to creeds as he is ; and if he will but consent to bear with me and try me for a while, he will find me standing upon the Confession of Faith.

A few thoughts upon creeds in general, and our own Confession in particular, and I have done.

Creeds, it is well known, originated early, in the assaults of error upon fundamental truth ; and were brought progressively, as collision and discrimination elicited the truth, into the well-defined systems which we now possess.

The design was, and ever has been, to repel the innovations of fundamental error, and unite the faithful in Christ Jesus in fellowship and action, for the extension of his kingdom upon earth.

The right of men to associate for the maintenance and propagation of truth and worship in accordance with their understanding of the Bible, expressed in epitomized form, cannot be denied. It defrauds none of their rights of conscience to worship without creeds, who choose to do so, while it is essential to the liberty of conscience of those who desire to be associated in this manner ; of which none will be likely to complain but those who desire to make their own conscience the rule of other men's judgments. The efficacy of creeds, to maintain the purity of truth and the unity of the Church, has been great. They have not, indeed, been omnipotent in repelling the encroachments of error, or securing entirely the unity of the Church ; but it follows not from this that they have been powerless. The question is not how much they have failed to accomplish, but how much they have done, and what had been the condition of the Church without these memorials of anterior discussions and attainments. It must have been to theology like the blotting out of civilization by the northern barbarians, or the oblivion of all experience

to coming generations, consigning the world in religion and science to the impotency of an everlasting infancy.

Creeds have indeed been the occasion of controversy ; but we might as well deplore the action of the atmosphere, because thunder-storms and tornadoes sometimes attend it. To the discussions of the Reformation we owe the emancipation of the world, the rights of free inquiry, the rights of conscience, the supreme authority of the Bible, the principles of its exposition, and the great principles of civil and religious liberty.

They were the battle begun,—the conflict of mind with brute force,—which will not terminate till the world is free. Our own independence is the fruit of it, and the overturnings which shake the world, and will shake it till knowledge and science cover the earth, are the consummation of that great conflict.

It was the creeds of the Reformation, also, and the zeal of holy men for them, which held Protestant nations together against the combinations of despotic force, and thus secured the permanent action of the great principles which were developed ; and they have stood as the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace, to break the force of temptation to apostasy,—to strengthen in a period of declension the things that remain, and to become rallying-points and means of a spiritual restoration. The thirty-nine articles have held the Episcopal Church through all her periods of declension, adversity, and change ; and though once almost a dead letter, are now powerfully instrumental in her glorious evangelical resurrection. So the standards of Scotland, and Geneva, and Germany, held their several Churches like so many anchors, while the enemy came in like a flood, but are now the powerful means by which God is preparing to bring back their

prosperity like the waves of the sea. In New England, where, for a little time, the creeds fell into a partial disrepute, they are coming into remembrance with renovated power and honor. They were, during half her history, established by civil and ecclesiastical law; and through the latter half maintained the confidence and affections of the orthodox churches to an extent equal to what they have ever received anywhere. And though the ministry did not subscribe them as the condition of licensure or ordination, they were examined closely in respect to the doctrines and experimental religion they inculcate; and no man with Pelagian heresies in head, or heart, could any sooner get into the Orthodox Congregational Churches of New England than he could enter the Presbyterian Church.

The Shorter Catechism, from generation to generation, has been taught in the families of the faithful, and was as uniform and almost as venerated an inmate as the Bible. It was the knowledge that the doctrines of this Catechism were the standard doctrines of the Presbyterian Church which made them willing to waive their denominational peculiarities of Church order, and pour their floods of pious emigrants, and prayers, and contributions, into the Presbyterian Churches at the West, without lifting a finger for a Congregational organization,—a form so dear to them, that, had it been assailed on their own territory, they would have laid life down in its defence. They gave up their own Church order, in respect to the West, on the ground of evangelical expediency, and their confidence in the Presbyterian Church as loving and maintaining the same doctrines as themselves. In the twenty-five years that I have pleaded the cause of the missions and institutions of the West, and in my last and most successful effort, I never heard, in a single instance, the objection made, “The money

is going out of our own Church, to build up another denomination." If it be true that there are any conspiring to change the standards of our Church, I have a right to say, from what I know, that, whoever the conspirators may be, they are not the ministers or Churches of New England, nor those who emigrate from New England.

What we have now chief occasion to guard against is, the repetition of the faults of other days, in relying too exclusively on the letter of our creeds, to prevent apostasy, and perpetuate the purity and power of the Church.

Experience has evinced that the generations of living men will govern the world, in spite of any possible legislation of those who have passed away; and that the only way to perpetuate creeds and constitutions is to perpetuate that nurture and admonition of the Lord which will make them as acceptable to the coming as they are to the existing generation.

This is the import of the Proverb, that a living dog is better than a dead lion. It was in this respect that our Puritan fathers committed an oversight. The public sentiment of their day was so united and efficient, and their laws and creeds so well ordered and efficacious, that it seems scarcely to have occurred to them that they should not live forever, or that the impulse they had given to them would not carry them down through all generations. They fell, therefore, into an unseemly confidence in the short-metre government of the family, Church and commonwealth, by power, instead of the kind and winning influence of argument and affection, and that religious and moral culture by which God is accustomed to fashion aright the heart. The consequence was, that their creeds and ecclesiastical laws began to operate gradually upon necks and hearts unaccustomed to the yoke, until at length away went colleges, and creeds, and

funds, and Churches, and consecrated property, by the force of laws which the living made, in contravention of the sacred intentions of the dead.

There is a lesson which the Church has been slow to learn, and yet must learn before her unbroken energies and cordial and united action can be thrown upon the world. It is the medium between requiring too little, or too much. The mind of man is so constructed that exact agreement in everything cannot be secured by persuasion or by force. Even the Romish Church, with the world in chains and her foot upon the neck of nations, could by no force or terror prevent the free-born mind from thinking, or compel it to exact unity of speculation; and much less can it be done now, and in our nation. Ecclesiastical authority has lost its terrors, and civil coercion is unknown, and original investigation is the order of the day,—proving all things, to hold fast that which is good. The result, in any communion, of attempting a government of creeds, *verbatim et literatim*, would be formality and debility and endless divisions, on the one hand, and fanaticism on the other. The monitory voice of experience on this subject is loud and urgent. The stern exactions of the English Church drove out the Puritans, whose virtues she needed, and whose mildly administered order might have benefited them; while the coerced separation produced the Revolution, and the eccentric zeal of the Commonwealth, and the formality and heresy which attended the reaction.

A similar course of urgent restriction by creeds, and of impatient zeal bursting from it by revivals of extravagance and excess, passed over Germany, and prepared the way first for dead orthodoxy, and next for rationalism. And in the same manner did the heresy of Church and state, in the time of Whitfield and the Tenants, produce separations and excess,

which made the one fanatical, to the disgrace of revivals for half a century, and the other cold and formal, till, in leaning away from zeal without knowledge, they fell first into dead orthodoxy, which was followed next by the Pelagian and Arian and Arminian heresies.

For many years our own Church has rested from these collisions and alternations of ultra zeal. United by the comprehensive, cordial subscription to the doctrines of our Confession, "as containing the system of doctrines taught in the holy Scriptures," implying a *bonâ fide* agreement in the fundamental doctrines, as they have been brought out in the controversies of the Church, and expounded in opposition to Arian and Unitarian and Papal and Pelagian errors, but never intended or understood as expressing an exact agreement in speculations or language on any subject. On the contrary, those who framed the Westminster Confession and Catechisms, and those who adopted them as the bond of union to our Church, differed in speculation and phraseology on some of the same points that the sons of the Church differ about now; but never, till recently, have they been made the ground of formal accusations of heresy, and regular ecclesiastical animadversion. And now the question cannot be whether one side or the other shall be expelled from the Church as hypocrites and heretics. We came in on both sides with the knowledge of these circumstantial varieties of opinion and language, and in every form of recognition were made welcome, and assured of the protection of the Church; and on neither side can we be stigmatized or expelled, without a breach of covenant, and the action and injustice of *ex post facto* laws.

The only question is, whether we will dissolve partnership, or attempt its continuance upon the new conditions of exact agreement in speculation and language on every subject, as

well as on fundamental doctrine. Whether the exposition of the Confession which I have given, on the subject of the natural ability of man as a free agent, and his moral inability as a totally-depraved sinner; of original sin, as including federal liability to the curse of the law, and as operating to the production of actual sin, not by force upon the will, or any absolute necessity of nature determining it to evil, but by an effectual, universal bias to actual sin; and of regeneration as a change of character, produced not by omnipotent action alone, but by the immediate and infallible influence of God's word and Spirit: whether the exposition of these doctrines, sustained by the language of the Confession, and corroborated by unbroken exposition from the primitive Church to this day, confirmed in the line of the most approved Presbyterian expositors, Calvin, Turretin and Witherspoon, and the great balance of biblical critics and expositors, shall be reversed and stigmatized as heresy; and the *imprimatur* of the Church be given to the doctrine that man possesses no ability of any kind to obey the Gospel,—that original sin forces and determines the will to actual sin, by an absolute necessity of nature,—that adult total depravity is involuntary, and the result of a constitution acting by the power of a natural and necessary cause,—and that regeneration is a change of the natural constitution, by the direct omnipotence of the Spirit, without any influential agency of the word of God? Such an exposition the Church, if it seem good to her, has the power of making; but not the right of giving to her exposition a retrospective action, to affect character, and ecclesiastical standing, and vested rights.

But the time hastens, as it would seem, when our Church must decide whether the examples of past abortive effort for exact identity in speculation and language, with all their

mournful consequences, shall be for our warning, or for our example; and whether the coming fifty years shall be years of schism, and impotency, and confusion worse confounded, or whether, like a band of brothers, we shall move on under the same auspices which hitherto have concentrated in our Church the energies of the East, and the West, and the North, and the South, till our victorious efforts, with those of other denominations who love our common Lord, shall, under his guidance and power, terminate in the universal victories of the latter day. And never was there a moment when a little panic of alarm, or impatience of feeling, may turn, for good or for evil, the life-giving or destroying waters of such a flood down through distant generations.

The consequences of new and more restricted terms of communion are too legible in past experience, and too manifest to unerring anticipation, to need labored exposition or fervent expostulation. And nothing assuredly could precipitate our beloved Church upon the disastrous alternative, but such an abandonment of Heaven as we do not believe in; and such a consequent infatuation of alarm and violence of passion, as would disregard alike both argument and expostulation, and with closed eye and deafened ear rush upon destruction. An event which we cheeringly believe his mercy will avert.

The means of our preservation are obvious and easy.

There will be, in a Church so extensive as our own, unavoidably some diversities of doctrinal phraseology in our communications,—theological provincialisms of men alike warm-hearted in their belief in the doctrinal and experimental views of our standards. These, as they pass from one department of the Church to another, we must not attempt to compel by force to change the dialect by which, from maternal lips, the truth was breathed into their infant minds, and made effectual

in their conversion, and made sacred by the association of theological instruction.

Such sudden unclothings of thought, for new and unaccustomed habiliments, are impossible. And yet, patience and kindness on the part of the presbyteries and fathers of the Church will easily secure to all the purposes of edification an assimilation which years of discourtesy and contention cannot compel.

We ought, indeed, to speak the same *things* ; but this means not the same words, but the same doctrines. Our Confession and Catechisms were intended as concise definitions, and not as furnishing the entire vocabulary of words in which their doctrines shall be preached. The Bible, itself, does not confine us to its own phraseology; otherwise all exposition and preaching would be superseded by the simple reading of the Bible. And yet, where the terms of the Confession are grateful, and the language of a strange dialect the occasion of misconception and fear, I would not purposely offend or fail to edify, by finding out acceptable words; but, as Paul would do, become all things to all men, that if possible I might save some. Much less would I speak slightly of our creeds, and the phrases which time and association had rendered dear to the people of God. But I should expect, in return, in my own congregation, the same liberty of speech which I accorded to others, and the same deference of courtesy to familiar phrases and cherished associations which I practised; and with a conciliatory spirit, and a small share of common sense and good manners, the Church from end to end might be quiet from all agitation on the subject.

Presbytery now took a recess. After the recess the roll was called by the Moderator, and the members in succession

had an opportunity of delivering their sentiments upon the case. Several availed themselves of the privilege ; but, in most cases, it was waived. The roll being gone through, Presbytery took a recess until the afternoon. In the afternoon, the members of Presbytery were called upon to vote separately on each charge, by saying *Sustained*, or *Not Sustained*.

The first charge being then read, the vote upon it stood as follows :

Sustained. — Messrs. Daniel Hayden, Francis Monfort, Ludwell G. Gaines, Sayres Gasley, Adrien Aton, J. Burt, William Skillinger, Israel Brown, Peter H. Kemper, A. B. Andrews, Andrew Harvey, William Cumback. — 12.

Not Sustained. — Messrs. Andrew S. Morison, Thomas J. Biggs, Benj. Graves, Artemas Bullard, F. Y. Vail, A. T. Rankin, Augustus Pomroy, Thomas Brainerd, George Beecher, Robert Porter, John Archard, Henry Hageman, J. G. Burnet, Bryce R. Blair, J. C. Tunis, J. Lyon, W. Carey, J. D. Low, S. Hageman, T. Mitchell, W. Owen, A. P. Bradley, Silas Woodbury. — 23.

So the first charge was declared to be not sustained.

On the second charge the vote stood the same as on the first charge.

As the facts included in the fourth charge were admitted by Dr. Beecher, no vote was taken upon it.

On the third, fifth and sixth charges, the vote stood as follows :

Sustained. — Messrs. Hayden, Monfort, Gaines, Gasley, Aton, Kemper. — 6.

Not Sustained. — Messrs. Morison, Graves, Biggs, Bullard, Vail, Rankin, Pomroy, Brainerd, G. Beecher, H. Hageman, S. Hageman, Bradley, Porter, Archard, Burnet, Blair, Tunis, Lyon, Carey, Low, Mitchell, Owen, Woodbury, Burt, Skillinger, Brown, Andrew, Harvey, Cumback. — 29.

On motion of Prof. BIGGS, the following minute was recorded as the decision of Presbytery in the case :

Resolved, That in the opinion of this Presbytery, the charges of J. L. Wilson, D.D., against Lyman Beecher, D.D., are not sustained, for the following reasons :

I. As to the charge of *depraved nature*, it appears in evidence that Dr. Beecher holds and teaches that in consequence of the fall of Adam, and the divinely-appointed connection of all his posterity with him, man is born with such a constitutional bias to evil that his first moral act, and all subsequent moral acts, until regenerated, are invariably sinful ; which bias to evil is properly denominated a depraved nature or original sin, as in the standards of our Church.

II. As to the second charge, relating to *total depravity and the work of the Holy Spirit*, Dr. Beecher holds and teaches that this depravity is so entire, and in such a sense insuperable, that no man is or ever will be regenerated without the special influences of the Holy Spirit accompanying the word, as expressed in the standards of our Church. — Larger Catechism, Question 155, and Scripture proofs.

On the subject of ability, Dr. Beecher holds and teaches that fallen man has all the constitutional powers or faculties to constitute moral agency and perfect obligation to obey God, and propriety of rewards and punishments ; that the will is not by any absolute necessity of nature determined to good or evil, according to the Confession of Faith, ch. ix. sec. 1, with Scripture proofs.

At the same time Dr. Beecher holds and teaches that man by the fall is *morally* disabled, being so entirely and obstinately *averse* from that which is good, and dead in sin, so that he is not able to convert himself, or prepare himself thereunto.

The extracts from Dr. Beecher's sermons brought to sustain the above charges, when taken in their proper connection, and with the limitations furnished by the context, do not teach doctrines inconsistent with the Bible and standards of our Church.

III. As to the charges of *Perfectionism*, slander and hypocrisy, they are altogether constructive and inferential, and wholly unsustained by the evidence.

Presbytery then resolved that they do not decide the

amount of censure due to Dr. Wilson, but refer the subject to the Synod for their final adjudication.

Dr. WILSON gave notice that he should APPEAL to Synod from this decision.

Messrs. Gaines, Skillinger, Kemper, Cumback, Aton, Andrew, Harvey, Burt, Brown, Hayden, Monfort and Gazley, gave notice of their dissent and protest against the decision.

Messrs. Stowe, Rankin and Brainerd, were appointed a committee to defend the above decision before the Synod.

The roll was then called, the minutes read, and Presbytery adjourned, after singing and prayer.

From this decision of the Presbytery an appeal was taken to the Synod. The record of the decision of Synod at Dayton, on appeal, I have not. The meeting was unusually full,—I suppose at least one hundred members were present,—and the decision “Not Sustained” was unanimous, with the exception of some ten or twelve votes.

From this decision of the Synod an appeal was made by Dr. Wilson to the General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church, in its session at Pittsburg; and after some days of that session had passed, Dr. Wilson rose in that Assembly, and said, “I came prepared to prosecute the appeal which I have brought to this body, but the friends whom I have been accustomed to consult, and whose opinion I ought to respect, have advised and requested me to withdraw the appeal, saying that it could not be sustained.” Therefore he requested permission to withdraw it. Accordingly permission was granted,—it is believed unanimously.

This was done after my Views of Theology had been published and extensively read.

REMARKS

ON AN ARTICLE IN THE PRINCETON REVIEW, ON DR.
BEECHER'S VIEWS OF THEOLOGY.

THE review of my Views of Theology in the *Biblical Repertory* is adapted to produce injurious effects far beyond its logical ability. It is invested with the general reputation and influence of a work which is the leading organ of the O. S. Presbyterian Church. Moreover, it has been deemed worthy of republication, for purposes of general circulation, among all classes of readers. Yet, logically viewed, it virtually concedes that there was very little ground for an assault upon me. The two main points which it proposes to discuss are my views on Original Sin and on Natural Ability. On the first of these, it is obliged to concede, and does fully concede, that my views are correct. On the second, there is, in fact, only the usual difference between us that exists between the New England divines and those of Princeton. And therefore, in view of facts, I infer that to oppose me fairly and logically on this one point did not seem to be enough to gain the end in view. It seemed to be deemed necessary to destroy by other means the effect of what could not be logically refuted. The way to effect this, which was, in fact, adopted, was to intermix with the review a series of personal assaults on my moral integrity, my capacities as a metaphy-

sician, and my trustworthiness as an expositor of Scripture and a narrator of historical facts. This series of personal assaults is, indeed, the most striking thing in the review, and is well adapted to produce in all who read it a feeling of hostility and of personal contempt towards me. I have no objection to a proper exposure and refutation of any errors of reasoning, exposition, or historical statement; but the continuous and deliberate effort to destroy my reputation and influence by a flippant and contemptuous exhibition of merely incidental errors, which pervades this review, is a violation of the rules of honorable controversy which admits of no just excuse.

If the reviewer and the *Biblical Repertory* were themselves free from all similar errors, though it would not justify such a course, yet it would render it less obviously inconsistent. But, in fact, there is not a point on which they have undertaken to express their astonishment at my errors, on which it is not true, either that their charges of error are totally unfounded, or else that they are liable to have retorted upon them the charge of similar or even greater errors.

The point on which the reviewer insists at the greatest length is a charge of self-contradiction on the doctrine of original sin. On this subject, this was the only possible mode of assault; for the correctness of my views, as set forth in my plea before the Synod, he could not and did not deny. Nothing, then, remained but to insinuate, as he did, that I insincerely changed my professed views, after the trial began, in order to escape condemnation, intending to revert to them when the danger was past, and to *assert* that, at all events, I have flatly contradicted my former views. For proof of this charge, he relies on passages of my sermon on Native Depravity, and of my lectures on Scepticism, and of

my letter to the editor of the *Christian Examiner*, in which I deny the possibility of a depraved nature, in the strict sense, anterior to the exercise of reason, conscience and choice, and also deny the transmission of such a nature by descent. I also declare that men are not, in the common sense of the term, guilty of Adam's sin; and that all punishable depravity is voluntary and personal.

These passages he contrasts with others, in which, on my trial, I declare that I regard original sin as a depraved nature, existing before choice, and, of course, as involuntary, and as transmitted by generation from Adam; and that all men, including even infants, are guilty of Adam's sin, and that penal evils are inflicted on them on account of it. In view of the alleged contradictions thus presented, the reviewer indulges himself in some very indecent merriment, with reference to a pretended visit of mine to New Haven, for the sake of assuring myself of my own personal identity, by the aid of Dr. Taylor. He also accumulates assertions of "contradiction palpable and broad," and "discrepancies which no sophistry can bridge over." He, no doubt, intended it to be a demolition of me, absolute and irretrievable; for he assailed at once both my moral honesty and my intellectual capacity. Considering, too, the prejudices of those to whom the review was addressed, nothing could be better adapted to do its work. Judged by the standard of partisan morals, which has been too often followed in the fierce campaigns of this theological warfare, namely, that the end sanctifies the means, such a course of conduct may be defensible; but on no ground of truth or honor does it admit of defence.

The real facts of the case are too plain and obvious to admit of a question. The alleged contradiction is a mere change in the use of terms, of which I gave full and oft-

repeated notice. Understanding by a depraved nature a nature sinful and punishable, in the strict sense, anterior to voluntary action, I have always denied the existence and the possibility of such a nature. Understanding by a depraved nature a deteriorated constitution, not deserving punishment itself, because involuntary, but nevertheless uniformly leading to sin, I have always admitted and taught the existence of a depraved nature, and its descent by ordinary generation, and on my trial I so stated. Understanding by the guilt of Adam's sin a just liability to punishment for it, in the strict sense, as if his moral character and deserts had been transferred to us by imputation, I have ever denied it. Understanding by it a social liability to certain evils that came on Adam, and through him on all his posterity, and which are *technically*, but not in the common use of terms, called *penal* evils, or *punishment*, I did, on my trial, admit that all men are guilty of Adam's sin.

Is it fair or honorable, upon such grounds, to charge contradictions on me, and to insinuate that I professed what I did not believe, in order to escape condemnation?

On this point the *Biblical Repertory* shall act as judge. Providentially, it so happened that in their controversy with the *Christian Spectator*, on the subject of Imputation, in the years 1830-1, the same charge of self-contradiction was made against them, on the same point. They had endorsed Turretin's views, and thus laid themselves open to the charge, as follows: "We said, the ill desert of one man cannot be transferred to another. Turretin says, 'The ill desert of Adam is transferred to his posterity.' Admitted, freely. Is not this a direct contradiction? Not at all. Turretin says, on one page, 'Imputation of sin does not constitute one a sinner;' on the very next, 'The imputation of Adam's

sin does constitute all men sinners.' Is there any contradiction here? So the 'Protestant' (Prof. Stuart) would say; but there is none. Let language be interpreted, not by *the tinkling of the words*, but by the fair and universal rules of construction. Imputation does render a man a sinner in one sense, and not in another,—judicially, not morally. So justification renders a man just in the eye of the law, but not inherently. How often may the same verbal proposition be, with equal propriety, affirmed or denied! How obvious is it that the same man may, at the same time, be pronounced both just and unjust, *sub diversa specie*! This is an evil, an ambiguity in the sense of terms, which pervades all language, and which subjects every writer to the charge of contradicting himself and everybody else any one may take a fancy to place in opposition to him. The word *guilt* is as ambiguous as the word *sinner*. It is sometimes used in a moral, at others in a legal sense; and so is the word *ill desert*. We used it in the former, Turretin in the latter."

So, then, at least, in the years 1830–1, the Princeton gentlemen knew what were the true principles of judgment in any case of alleged contradictions. Then they knew that words were ambiguous, and that *sinner*, *guilt*, and *ill desert*, and such like words, could be used in two senses; and that verbal contradictions were not, of course, real ones. All this they well knew when their own reputation called for a knowledge of it. How, then, did it happen that, in 1837, when these same principles would have defended my reputation and moral character, that they were so entirely forgotten? Why did they, at one time, insist that their own language should be "interpreted by the fair and universal laws of construction," and then, when my interests were at stake, insist on interpreting my language by the mere "tinkling of the

words" ? Why did they, at one time, claim for themselves the full benefit of the ambiguity of terms, and then utterly deny to me any benefit from the same source ?

There is the less excuse for their course in this matter, in view of the fact that, in order to remove all grounds of misunderstanding, I expressly stated in my plea that I merely changed my use of terms, but not my opinions. What I once denied I told them that I still denied ; but, taking certain terms in a different sense, I was perfectly willing to express my old opinions in a new dress. The facts in the case are notorious, and undeniable.

I do not pretend to deny that I once assumed that interpretation of the Confession of Faith and of the creeds of the Reformers, on *imputation*, *ability*, &c., to be true, which was maintained by the Triangular or old school divines. So interpreted, I do not pretend to deny that I rejected the idea of the strict and proper imputation of Adam's sin, or of the guilt of it, to his posterity. I denied no less decidedly the reality of a nature preceding action which was in the strict and proper sense sinful and punishable, and also the descent of such a nature from Adam to his posterity. I declared that there is no depravity which is not wholly voluntary ; and no depravity or guilt, but that which arises from the transgression of the law under such circumstances as constitute accountability, and desert of punishment. This I concede that I said in the letter, before mentioned, to the editor of the *Christian Examiner*, and also in other places. I did not then enter into an examination of the soundness of that interpretation, but assuming, as other New England divines had done, the correctness of the old school exposition, I rejected it. But, after this, in the years 1830-1, we were taught by the Princeton oracles that this was a false interpretation of

the Presbyterian standards and of the creeds of the Reformation; and that they do not teach that the substance or essence of man is sinful, or that such a sinful substance or essence descends from Adam to his posterity, or that they are, in the common and proper sense, guilty of his sin; and that guilt means simply social liability to punitive evil, which evil also is punitive merely in a technical sense, and not as being truly and properly a just punishment of sin. By a depraved nature, they also teach us, is meant a nature devoid of original righteousness, and of divine influences to incline it to good; and, therefore, by reason of its inherent natural propensities, tending to evil. Taking original sin to denote such a nature, I did teach that original sin is involuntary, and that it descends from Adam to his posterity by ordinary generation, and is properly called native depravity, or an evil nature. Taking guilt in the sense just specified, I did profess to believe that the guilt of Adam's sin is imputed to his posterity, even to infants before personal accountability; and that the covenant was made, not only with Adam, but with his posterity; and that they sinned in him and fell with him in this sense,—that their character and liability to ultimate ruin were decided by his deed.

Of these changes in interpretation, and in the use of phraseology, I gave repeated and formal notice. Nay, so frequently did I advert to these facts, that it was hardly consistent with good taste in writing; but I thought it desirable and necessary to cut off all pretexts for a misunderstanding of my language. But, what can limit and bind the determination of a thorough partisan? After all my care, the reviewer, as if I had said nothing of the kind, parades my earlier and my later statements on these points, and, regarding merely "the tinkling of the words," charges on me "contradiction

palpable and broad." He professes his inability to account for this state of facts. He thinks that I must be acute enough to see the contradiction, and hopes that I am not too proud to own that I did renounce and contradict during my trial my former views. He hopes, too, that I was not taking refuge in an esoteric sense until the days of my trial were over, intending then to revert to my former views. But, after suggesting this uncandid and unchristian supposition, he leaves his readers to choose for themselves which of the alternatives they please. Such, then, is the force of sectarian bigotry, and of a fixed purpose to find occasion against me, that it has led to the total disregard, in my case, of the most manifest and equitable rules of interpretation, the defence of which the Princeton gentlemen are always ready to claim in their own behalf.

The reviewer also tries to prove that I have given two contradictory accounts of the object of my sermon on Native Depravity. But what are these accounts? I said that I meant in it to refute the Pelagian notions of native excellence in man before regeneration. This, moreover, I said was to be effected "*by explaining and proving the doctrine of total depravity.*" A part of this explanation and proof consisted in showing that depravity could not be resolved into an involuntary sinful nature before action, nor into divine efficiency. All this was essential to a proper statement and proof of depravity, on which I relied as the means of gaining my proposed ends; and I constructed my sermon so as to effect it, and so stated on my trial. Hereupon, the reviewer, ever intent on finding occasion against me, says that this second account of the object of my sermon is inconsistent with the first. Is it, indeed? If I aim in the sermon to refute Pelagian notions, and if I rely on a proper statement of the doc-

trine of total depravity as the means, is it not proper at one time to state that the sermon was made to attain the first-mentioned end, and at another, that it was made in order to secure the appropriate means of gaining this end? What must be the prejudice of the mind that tries to manufacture a contradiction out of this!

In my sermon on Native Depravity, I use the words "depraved nature" to denote a fixed character, voluntarily formed by the sinner. The reviewer declares that this is an abuse of language. "If a 'depraved nature' means actual transgression, then black may mean white, and square may mean round, and root branch, and language may be thrown aside as less explicit than dumb signs."

The reviewer professes, moreover, on this ground, to be unable to understand what I mean, in my exposition of my sermon, by "a depraved nature, in reference to actual depravity," and insinuates that my interpretation of my own language is a mere evasion of its obvious sense. To this I reply that it is not improper nor unusual to call a permanent and controlling choice, or a habit of choice, from which results a permanent moral character, by the term *nature*. When Peter says that by *great and precious promises* believers are made partakers of the divine nature, the reference must be to that fixed habit of holy choice and emotion which is of the same nature with the holiness of God, and is the result of the influence of the promises of the Gospel. The nature of the cause decides the nature of the effect. Motives affect and change choice and conduct, and not the constitutional powers which precede conduct. Nor is this application of the term *nature* at all unusual. Turretin, to illustrate the binding force of the divine laws, even in cases of most decided moral inability, says, "The intemperate man, who cannot

refrain from intoxication, his accustomed course of drinking *having become his nature*, is, nevertheless, bound by the laws of sobriety and temperance." Locus 10, quest. 4, sec. 23. So, also, Marius is represented by Sallust as saying, "I have spent my life in the discharge of duty, and by the force of custom *well-doing has become my nature*" (*benefacere jam ex consuetudine in naturam vertit*), Jugurtha, § 85. Moreover, this use of the term *nature* is recognized by the best lexicographers. Freund, in his Latin Lexicon, as translated by Andrews, gives "*character*" as one definition of *nature*, and refers for illustration to this passage from Sallust, and also to the phrase of Quintilian, "*facere sibi naturam alicujus rei*,"—that is, to make a voluntary nature in respect to anything good or evil. The same definition in substance is also found in Leverett's Latin Lexicon, based on the great work of Facciolati and Forcellini.

Am I not, then, justified by such authorities in my use of the word *nature*? If every sinner, at the beginning of moral agency, begins to act under the influence of a sinful controlling choice, if this becomes continually more fixed and habitual, and controls and establishes the other habits of life, is not this a voluntary depraved nature, according to the best usage of language?

Such a nature is sinful in the strictest and most perfect sense. Nor can any nature be holy or depraved, *in this sense*, except a voluntary nature. There must be, as I have said, understanding, conscience and choice, to render such a nature possible.

Nor is there in such statements concerning a voluntary depraved nature any contradiction to other statements, in which I affirm that there is in all men a depraved or sinful nature anterior to choice, which is the reason why all men

uniformly choose wrong. In cases of this kind, such words as *depraved*, *sinful*, &c., are not used in the strict sense, but in the more popular and loose sense. A sinful nature in this sense is an original constitution which leads to sin. It is called sinful with reference to its uniform results, and not because it is in itself worthy of punishment. To understand all this, nothing is necessary to the Princeton gentlemen, but to give me the benefit of the rules of interpretation by which they insist that their own language shall be interpreted.

Of course, I do not say that a depraved nature, in this second sense, is impossible, without reason, conscience and *choice*; and, therefore, I do not deny, in my sermon on Native Depravity, the doctrine of original sin, as I elsewhere state and explain it.

The reviewer not only tries thus to produce contempt for my character as a metaphysician by accumulating baseless charges of self-contradiction and absurdity, but he also appeals to theological prejudice to overwhelm me. Because I teach that all sin is voluntary, he represents me as "lipping the very shibboleth of the New Haven school;" and again he says, "This is the very language of the New Haven school." Did not the reviewer know that this was the language of the Hopkinsian school, long before New Haven divinity had been heard of? If so, then why not state the truth?

The only possible ground of charging error upon me is the statement made by me that the Reformers held to physical depravity,—that is, that the very substance or essence of the soul was depraved, and that sin was a property of every man's nature, and was propagated as really as flesh and blood. I now admit that some do disavow this. But it is yet a controversy whether their language does not fairly teach it. At all

events, when I wrote my letter to the *Christian Examiner*, I thought it did, and therefore rejected their views so understood. But subsequently I adopted the interpretation of their language given by the Princeton divines. If their interpretation is correct, then I never rejected the views of the Reformers on original sin, as the reviewer charges on me, but merely an erroneous interpretation of their views.

The reviewer also represents me as denying original sin in my letter to the *Christian Examiner*, because I say "that there is a connection of some kind between the sin of Adam and the universal, voluntary and entire depravity of his posterity; so that it is in consequence of Adam's sin that all mankind do sin voluntarily, as early as they are capable of accountability and moral action." In addition to this, I also deny the imputation of Adam's sin, and the transmission of a sinful nature, in the strict sense. In view of these facts, the reviewer says that I leave nothing but a connection of some kind; and that "it is mere quibbling, or something worse, to retain the phrase *original sin*, when everything that could be meant by it is rejected." Is it so, indeed? Is a depraved nature, in the sense of a nature not strictly sinful, but always leading to sin, nothing? Is a social liability to inherit such a nature, in consequence of Adam's sin, nothing? Is such a connection with Adam's sin nothing? If I reject the descent of a depraved substance, in the strict sense, and the strict imputation of Adam's sin, I do no more than the Princeton gentlemen themselves. And is it mere quibbling, or something worse, for them to retain the phrase *original sin*?

It appears, then, that, after all that the reviewer has said of "my pitiable plight," and hopeless conflict with the obvious meaning of my words, and my wandering mazes of confusion

and nonsense," the simple truth is, that, by his want of common candor and fairness in the interpretation of my words, he has left himself in the pitiable plight in which I have presented him. In the judgment of all candid men, language so disrespectful, so gross, so offensive and so ungentlemanly, as he has seen fit to use towards me in the course of his review, cannot but, in the end, react upon himself.

I pass now to his strictures on me with reference to the subject of Natural Ability. This part of the review occupies thirty-five pages; and yet the real essence of the argument, as against my position, is contained in two pages (pp. 192, 193, *Princeton Theol. Essays*, vol. II.). As opposed to Fatalism, I teach, that, in any given case of choice, man still retains the power of contrary choice. This the reviewer denies, on the ground that man always must choose according to his predominant inclination at any time, and has neither the power to choose against it, nor to change it by a direct act of will. That in any case a man could have chosen differently from what he did, *if he had inclined so to do*, is all the power of contrary choice which he admits.

The result of this, of course, is, that, on his principles, no man, at any time, could have chosen differently from what he did. It is not merely true in the case of an inclination to sin in depraved man, but also in the case of an inclination to perform holy acts in angels, and, indeed, in all cases whatever of voluntary action of any kind, and in all worlds. As he states it, it is a universal law of action. But, so stated, facts prove it to be untrue. Was there a sinful inclination in holy angels before they fell? If not, if all their inclinations were holy, then it was impossible for them ever to make a sinful choice. But they did. Facts, then, are at war with the reviewer's theory.

But let us examine it more closely. What does he mean by *inclination*? In another case he uses *desire* as synonymous with it, and in another case *affections*. If, then, for example, a sinner is under the controlling influence of strong sensual desires or affections, is it true that he cannot choose contrary to them? Has God given to the mind no power of choosing, according to reason and conscience, against the strongest sensual desires and affections?

Is it true that desires, affections, appetites and the like, are of the same order as a sense of duty, a consciousness of what is honorable and right? Have not the latter a just authority which the first have not? Is not man conscious of it? Is it not reasonable that man should be made with power to respond to this consciousness, by choosing against his desires, affections and appetites, however strong, in view of justice, honor and right?

If not, how can the duty of self-denial ever be inculcated? How can man be called on to crucify the flesh, cut off a right hand, pluck out a right eye, take up the cross and follow Christ? What power could a preacher have, in contending against the sway of the sinful appetites, desires and affections of his hearers, who should tell them that the doctrine that they have power to choose, according to conscience, against such influences, however strong, is false and heretical?

If it should be said, in reply, that, in every case of right choice, a man still chooses according to predominant moral desires, affections and propensities, I reply that a sense of moral obligation is neither a desire, an affection or a propensity. It is a peculiar state of mind, of entirely another order, and is designed to act as a counterpoise of these. Therefore, in this region, at least, we find a field for the power of contrary choice. Man can choose either according to his sinful

inclinations, desires and affections, or against them, and according to his conscience. Moreover, whichever way he chooses, he had power to choose the other way. This, moreover, is the most important field of choice, and that with which theologians are specially interested; for it is their great work to call on man to follow reason, honor, right and conscience, in opposition to sinful inclinations, desires and affections.

But the reviewer asserts that Edwards and the New England divines have taught no such power of contrary choice as I maintain, and labors largely to prove it by quotations from Edwards, pp. 182—184. I freely concede that Edwards did repudiate such a power of contrary choice as was held by the Arminian writers, whom he was opposing. This power, as he informs us, assumed indifference in the will to motives, and contingency of volitions in the sense of chance, and that the will determined each choice by a preceding act of choice. Any power of contrary choice, resting on such a basis, I repudiate as sincerely as Edwards. But did Edwards reject the thing that I hold under this name? Did he hold that in every act of choice whatever there was no power of any kind to choose otherwise? Was this his idea of moral inability as compared with natural inability? Did he merely hold that men have power to act according to their choice, but no power whatever to choose otherwise than they do?

In reply to this, I say, that if language can contradict such a theory, Edwards has formally and definitely contradicted it. At the close of sec. 4, Part 1, he says, not of *external acts*, but of *acts of the will*, and that, too, in cases of moral inability, “In these things, to ascribe a non-performance to the *want of power or ability*, is not just; because the thing wanting is not a being *able*, but a being *willing*. There are

faculties of mind, a capacity of nature, and *everything else sufficient*, but a disposition; nothing is wanting but a will."

It is, then, just to say, according to Edwards, that there is *ability* to perform the required acts of will, even in cases where sinners disobey, and are, in a moral sense, unable. The thing wanting is not *ability*; there are faculties of mind, and a capacity of nature, and *everything else sufficient*; nothing is wanting but willingness. Now, whether Edwards calls this the power of contrary choice or not, it is all that I mean by it, and therefore, in the thing, if not in the name, I agree with Edwards.

Once more, the idea of Fatalism, as I reject it, was distinctly presented to Edwards, and carefully considered, for he had been charged with agreeing with the Fatalism of Lord Kaimes. But, after careful thought, he denies the charge. In his reply to Lord Kaimes, he quotes him as teaching as follows: "All things that fall out in the natural and moral world are alike necessary. This *inclination and choice* is unavoidable, caused by the prevailing motive. In this lies the necessity of our action, that in such circumstances it was impossible we could act otherwise." Here now Fatalism (*just as I have described it*) is clearly set forth by Lord Kaimes. Its essence is a fixed necessity of CHOOSING as we do, like that necessity which exists between natural causes and effects. It could not be more clearly presented. What, then, did Edwards say? Did he recognize and sanction it as his doctrine? Nay, he rejected it, just as explicitly and indignantly as I do. In opposition to it, he says, "I have largely declared that the connection between antecedent things and consequent ones, which takes place *with regard to the acts of men's wills*, which is called moral necessity, is called by

the name of *necessity* IMPROPERLY; and that all such terms as *must, cannot, impossible, unable, irresistible, unavoidable, invincible, &c.*, when applied here, are not applied in their proper signification, * * and that such a necessity as attends *the acts of men's wills* is more properly called certainty than necessity."

And do not I teach certainty of moral action as truly as Edwards; and does he not reject what I have defined as Fatalism as truly as I? And is there any possible middle-ground, between the rejection of such Fatalism as Edwards rejects, and the admission of the power of contrary choice as I hold it? I concede that it is not the Arminian idea of power to the contrary, but it is all that I have ever held or taught, and in it I agree with Edwards.

Moreover, Edwards was understood by his intimate friends and disciples as I have understood him. Who better understood him than Hopkins, his favorite pupil, and the editor of his works? Whilst, then, Hopkins, as the expositor of Edwards, clearly asserted the depravity of the sinner, and his moral inability to make him a new heart, did he understand this as a denial of the sinner's power to choose differently from what he did, even to the extent of changing his own heart? Listen to him in reply to the sinner who pleads his absolute inability to do his duty as an excuse. "The unregenerate sinner, who has reformed all ways of external sin, and prays to God for a new heart, which he thinks he sincerely desires, but that it is wholly *out of his power to change his own heart*,—such a one, I say, makes himself in a great measure easy in an unregenerate state, while *he thinks he does all he can*. Such a sinner is not under genuine, thorough convictions, and never will nor possibly

can be, while he believes this representation just." Hopkins' Works, III. 299.

So, then, according to Hopkins, it is not just to say that a sinner cannot change his own heart, or to say that he has done all he can until he has changed his own heart. Nay, so false are these assertions, that no man who believes them either is, or possibly can be, under genuine and thorough conviction of sin. The truth, then, is, according to Hopkins, that a sinner can change his own heart, and has never done all he can till he has done it. And is not this the power of contrary choice? At all events, it is all that I mean by it, or ever did. Nothing that I have ever said is stronger or more unguarded than this statement of Hopkins. It is not necessary for me to multiply such quotations. I will only say, that I see no rational course, after rejecting that Fatalism which Lord Kaimes has set forth, and which Edwards and all his followers have always rejected, except to take the ground of the power of contrary choice,—not, indeed, as the Arminians held it, whom Edwards opposed, but as I have developed it, and set it forth.

But the reviewer once more attempts to set me in opposition, not only to Edwards, but to *all Calvinistic writers*, on account of my use of the terms *liberty, freedom, &c.*, in connection with the will. This is worthy of particular notice, on account of his arrogant assumption of extended and accurate knowledge on the subject, and his efforts, by detecting incidental errors in me in questions of history and interpretation, to destroy my influence as a writer. I know of no case, however, in which a writer of such magnificent pretences has involved himself in such a maze of gross and inexcusable errors.

He takes the ground, then, "that we derive our notion of

freedom from the dependency of our actions upon our volitions. If, when we will a particular act, the act follows, we are free.”—*Prin. Theol. Essays*, vol. II. p. 187. Accordingly, he defines a free agent as “one who is not hindered by any extrinsic impediment from acting according to his own will.”—p. 187. He then asks, “How can we raise the question whether the will itself be free?” and again he asserts “the question whether the will itself is free is nonsense.”—p. 184. When he says that this use of terms is sanctioned by Edwards, he is clearly correct. But when he proceeds to say that in it all Calvinistic writers agree (p. 184, and 187), I am amazed at either his ignorance or his audacity. But so it is. Accordingly he proceeds to censure me for saying that man is *free to choose*, with power of contrary choice, and for inquiring whether *choice is free*, and whether man *in choosing is coerced or free*, in order to decide the question of responsibility. In short, he again and again denies the propriety of applying the terms *free, liberty, freedom*, &c., to the will or to its acts, or to man in reference to the power of willing, and confines them solely to man in view of the connection between volitions and their consequent actions; and most magisterially asserts that *all Calvinistic writers* do the same.

And yet this same reviewer was at this very time a professor in the Theological Seminary of Princeton, and a sworn defender of the Confession of Faith of the Presbyterian Church. Let it now be well considered that in the ninth chapter of that same Confession we are taught as follows: “God hath endued THE WILL of man with that NATURAL LIBERTY that it is neither forced nor by any absolute necessity of nature determined to good or evil.” Astonishing! THE WILL endued by God with LIBERTY! Were the West-

minster Assembly of Divines, then, no Calvinists? Have they plunged headlong into nonsense? Or has the reviewer, through a fixed purpose to censure me, plunged himself into a most humiliating blunder, for a man of so much pretension and occupying such a station in the Church?

Nor is this all. The Princeton reviewers, in whose name he was now speaking, are, by the same sentence, no less unceremoniously turned out of the lists of Calvinistic writers. For, in an article on the power of contrary choice, and in an express statement of the point in question, they say (*Essays*, vol. I. p. 251), "Neither is the question whether *the will has liberty of choice*; that is, in every act of choice *acts freely*, according to the pleasure of the agent, and not by constraint or compulsion. THIS IS AGREED ON ALL HANDS." So, then, it is agreed on all hands that the will has liberty of choice; and if our learned reviewer is to be believed, the whole Church, including all the Princeton reviewers, except himself, are no Calvinists, and are as deeply plunged in nonsense, in this particular, as I myself.

Nor will even old Calvin himself, we fear, escape any better than we; for (B. I. c. 15, § 8) he ascribes to Adam "a free choice of good and evil;" and, as opposed to compulsion and physical necessity, he asserts the existence of *free will* in all ages. — B. II. c. 2, § 7, and elsewhere. Nor is this all. We have the authority of Calvin, as well as of history, for the assertion, that all preceding writers,—that is, the scholastic divines and the fathers,—not excepting Augustine, applied the terms, *free*, *freedom*, &c., to the will and its acts, even as I have done. And it lies upon the very face of Turretine that he so applies the terms. He says that it is a calumny when the Papists say "that they (the Reformed) reject both the name and the reality of *free will*;" for, says

he, "we shall soon prove that we establish *free will* much more correctly than our adversaries." Again he says, "In order that *choice may be free*, it ought to be exempt from compulsion and physical necessity." This *essential liberty of choice*, he says, "is in all men, always, in every condition." — See Turretine, L. 10, q. 1—4.

How happens it, then, that the reviewer has, with all his pretensions, fallen into such a wilderness of blunders? It would seem to be from the fact that he was misled by supposing that Edwards, Collins and Hobbs (whom it seems he had just read for the occasion, at least in part), were fair representatives of the whole Calvinistic world in their use of the words *free*, *freedom*, &c., as applied to moral agents and the will. Nothing can be further from the fact. Not one of Edwards' New England followers, so far as I recollect, followed him in his definition of liberty. Hopkins said that freedom consisted in voluntary action itself, and not in the connection between volitions and the acts dependent on them. Edwards the younger and West said that liberty was not voluntary action itself, but a quality of it,—that is, its exemption from compulsion and physical necessity. President Day, even in a professed defence of Edwards, regards his definition of liberty as unsatisfactory, and apparently evasive.

But the fact is, that Edwards, though he wrongly defined *liberty*, yet, as I have shown, held to the facts in which liberty of will consists as I hold it; that is, he denied fatal and physical necessity of choice, and held to a power to choose right, but refused to apply to it the name of *liberty*. I do apply to it the name *liberty*, and that is the difference between us. It is a difference in the use of terms. Moreover, in my use of terms, the Confession of Faith, the Prince-

ton Review and almost the whole Calvinistic world, are with me, in this particular, and against Edwards and the reviewer.

Moreover, when Edwards engaged in the work of preaching, forgetful of theories, he used the word just as I do. For example, in his sermon on indecision, from 1 Kings, 18 : 21, "How long halt ye," &c., he thus sets forth the unreasonableness of indecision : "God has made us reasonable creatures, and *capable of rationally determining for ourselves*. * * God hath made us *capable* of making a *wise choice* for ourselves as to the life we shall choose to lead. * * God also puts into our hands a happy opportunity *to determine for ourselves*. What better opportunity can a man desire to consult his own interest than to have *liberty to choose* his own portion?" Here, then, we have not merely power to act as we choose, but power to determine and liberty to choose, and to choose aright, on the great question of eternal life.

In proof of this, Edwards appeals to the same texts on which I have relied ; for example, Deut. 30 : 19,— "I call heaven and earth to record this day against you, that I have set before you life and death, blessing and cursing ; therefore *choose* life, that thou and thy seed after thee may live." He also refers to Ezek. 18 : 31, 32, and 33 : 11.

Indeed, even the reviewer, when he happens to have a little changed his point of vision, reports certain facts of his own mental consciousness, which the Princeton reviewers declare to be the highest possible form of *the freedom of the will*. He tells us that even he is "conscious of a power which we possess *TO WILL* as we please." Notice ; not a power *TO ACT as we will*, which is his old definition of freedom, but *TO WILL* as we please.

This means, as our previous exposition of the reviewer's

theory shows, that man has power to will according to his predominant inclination, or appetite, or desire; using the words "as we please," not to denote "as we choose," in the Edwardean sense, but as our desires, appetites and sense of pleasure are. On this the Princeton reviewers say, in another place, "If, then, we *can will* as we please, we have *all conceivable liberty* and power, so far as the will is concerned." And again, "There can be no necessity in volition; it is *liberty itself*." This view of volition, as liberty itself, is exactly the ground of Hopkins. We do not endorse the doctrine, but merely show once more that the application of the terms *free, freedom, liberty, &c.*, to the will and its acts, which the reviewer condemns in me, is abundantly authorized by his fellow-reviewers, as well as the New England divines; and that it is properly applied to his own reported consciousness, and so applied presents it as in their view the highest form of THE FREEDOM OF THE WILL. We, however, can conceive of a form of freedom of the will still higher than this; that is, the power to choose, not only according to our pleasure, but also according to truth, right and duty, even against our pleasure,—that is, against the demands of any appetites, passions or propensities, however strong.

The reviewer, however, quotes against me a passage from the treatise on Original Sin, in which Edwards repudiates the idea which he ascribed to Dr. John Taylor, "that there is a *sufficient* power and ability in all mankind to do all their duty, and wholly to avoid sin." And again, that there is "in their own natural ability *sufficient* means to avoid sin, and to be perfectly free from it." To this Edwards says, "If the means are *sufficient*, then there is no need of more, and therefore there is no need of Christ's dying in order to it." On this the reviewer asserts that my opinions and those

of J. Taylor are identical; that no jugglery upon his words can separate between them; that Edwards repudiates such views with abhorrence, and yet, that the sanction of his venerable name is invoked for them. — p. 181, 182.

To this I reply, no jugglery is needed, but merely candor and common sense. The whole question turns on the sense attached by Edwards to the word “sufficient.” If by “sufficient provision” and “sufficient means” he understood provision and means which do in fact avail, either generally or in any case actually, to deliver men from sin, and keep them perfectly holy, so that in practice it is safe to rely on them as ever or commonly securing these results, then I repudiate the doctrine with as much abhorrence as Edwards. But if by “sufficient means” is meant that natural ability to choose right which averts Fatalism and creates obligation, then I do not repudiate the doctrine; and if any one will insist that Edwards does (as the reviewer alleges), he merely involves him in self-contradiction; for in the passage already quoted he says, “The thing wanting is not a being *able*, but a being *willing*. There are faculties of mind, and a capacity of nature, and everything else SUFFICIENT, but a disposition. Nothing is wanting but a will.” On these grounds he says, and, be it well considered, concerning *the acts of the will*, “To ascribe a non-performance to the want of *power* or *ability* is not just.”

Once more, the reviewer censures me for not always attaching the epithet “natural” to the word *ability*, as if by the omission I taught a kind of ability contrary to the regular New England doctrine. For example, when I say, “the moment the ability of obedience ceases, the commission of sin becomes impossible,” or when I assert “the full ability of every sinner to comply with the terms of salvation;” or,

again, "that men are free agents, possessed of such faculties, and placed in such circumstances, as render it practicable for them to do whatever God requires;" he declares that all this is an improvement on the regular New England doctrine of Natural Ability. — pp. 179—181.

To this I reply, the regular New England doctrine is not *Fatalism* concealed under the phrase "natural ability," meaning thereby merely power to do as we will, whilst, at the same time, we are unable, in every sense, to will otherwise than we do. This is the very *Fatalism* of Lord Kaimes, which Edwards indignantly repudiated as utterly at war with his doctrine. In opposition to this, Hopkins, too, as we have seen, emphatically declared that a sinner *can change his own heart*, and has never done all that he can, until he has obeyed the command so to do. In all my statements above quoted, I mean no more than this. Nor is it needful, after once and again defining my use of terms, on all occasions to introduce the word "natural" to qualify the ability asserted. Neither Edwards nor Hopkins always does thus, as may be seen by the passages recently quoted from them.

In addition to this, if any shall so far abuse the phrase "natural ability" as to make it a deceitful veil of *Fatalism*, using it as implying no power to choose right, but only a power to act right if we first choose right, whilst we are in every sense unable to choose right, then it is high time to expose such a delusive jugglery on words, and to say that by the ability of which we speak we mean a real power to choose as God commands, and not a verbal and delusive shadow of ability, which is at heart nothing but disguised *Fatalism*.

The mode which the reviewer adopts, in order to neutralize the power of my quotations from the fathers and other theo-

logical writers, deserves notice and reprobation. He asserts that when I quote authorities I shift the question to this,—Has man power *to act* according to his will? and accumulate quotations to prove this point; and then shift back again, and represent them as proving that man has power freely *to choose*, instead of power *to act* according to his choice. “By thus interchanging phrases of different import, and shifting the question at the proper turn, he is enabled to array on his side a formidable list of authorities, from the days of the fathers down to the present generation.” “The inquiry raised is, whether CHOICE IS FREE, *except when some authority is to be introduced.*”—p. 186.

Now, to this I reply, that either the reviewer had read my authorities, or he had not. If he had, he was dishonest. If he had not, then he was inexcusably ignorant. For the facts, as they lie upon the very face of my quotations, are obviously and irremediably at war with his assertion. Take one notorious case. I appeal, as just stated, to the Confession of Faith (chap. IX. § 1) to prove that THE WILL of man is endowed by God with LIBERTY in its determinations, and that it is neither forced, nor by any absolute necessity of nature determined, to good or evil. Is this a shifting of the question? Does this merely answer the question whether man can ACT as he wills, and not whether HIS WILL IS FREE? And is the Confession of Faith of the Presbyterian Church no authority to a professor in the Theological Seminary at Princeton? Are the Westminster divines no authority to Presbyterians?

It is, indeed, quite a remarkable fact, that, although the Confession of Faith was the very standard of trial, and although I appealed to it again and again, and claimed that it was on my side, and declared explicitly that its statements on the liberty of the will contained exactly my doctrine of natu-

ral ability, yet on this most vital point of all, the reviewer makes no effort whatever to answer me. He is here as silent as the grave concerning the Confession of Faith. Why is this? Did he really forget that this was the very standard of judgment? Did he forget that on the point at issue it was decisive? Did he forget that I had appealed to it again and again? Did he forget that in express terms it sustains both my language and my views? Did he forget all this, and then, in pure ignorance, charge me with shifting the question, so that the testimony of the Westminster divines does not meet the point,—Is the will free? If he did all this in pure ignorance, then the public will judge how fit he was, in point of knowledge, to write a proper review of such discussions. If he did not do it in ignorance, then the public will judge what shall be thought of the moral integrity of a man who could knowingly be guilty of such an act. Moreover, they will judge how far it is consistent with common honesty for those on whom the responsibility now rests for the statements of the Princeton Review, if there are any such, to perpetuate this and other like charges, uncorrected, to all coming ages.

A similar course of remark might be repeated, with reference to authority after authority. They assert the freedom of the will, or the power of choosing otherwise than we do, as opposed to Fatalism, with wonderful explicitness. For example, Justin Martyr says, "If mankind had not the power, by *free will*, to avoid what is disgraceful and to *choose* what is good, they would not be responsible for their actions." Is this merely a power to act as we choose? Is it not a power *freely to choose* right or wrong?

Irenæus places the ground of responsibility in "free will,"

and represents God as approving men for "*choosing* and persevering in that which is good."

Clement of Alexandria says that God has given us "free and sovereign power, not having allowed what we *choose* or what we *avoid* to be subject to a slavish necessity."

Tertullian says, "I find that man was formed by God with *free will*, and with power over himself, observing in him no image or likeness to God more than in this respect." "Transgression would not have been threatened with death, if the contempt of the law were not placed to the account of man's *free will*."

Origen avows and defends free will, and says, "Every one has the power of *choosing* good and *choosing* evil."

Cyprian asserts,—“Man, being left to his own *liberty* and endowed with *free will*, seeks for himself death or salvation."

Eusebius says, "Every rational soul has naturally a good free will, formed for *the choice* of what is good. * * When a person, who had the power of *choosing* what is good, *did not choose* it, but voluntarily turned away from what is best, pursuing what is worst, what room for escape could be left him?"

Jerome says, "That we possess free will, and can turn it either to a good or bad purpose, according to our determination, is owing to his grace, who made us after his image and likeness."

Augustine. —“Free will is given to the soul. * * * Every one has it in his will, either to choose those things that are good, and be a good tree, or to choose those things that are bad, and be a bad tree."

Luther. —“The will does what it does, whether good or bad, at perfect liberty."

Dr. Woods says, "I grant that man has a power of choosing between different courses, and of yielding to either of two opposite motives."

Such is a small specimen of the authorities which I introduced. Do they not meet the question, *Is choice free* as opposed to Fatalism? Yet, either after reading them, or else without reading them, the reviewer has dared to say, "The inquiry raised is, whether choice is free, EXCEPT WHEN SOME AUTHORITY IS TO BE INTRODUCED!"

It is, indeed, true that one of my authorities (Howe) is liable to exception, as teaching merely that man can *act* as he *will*. But of the great mass of them it is not true. They meet the true question, whether, as opposed to Fatalism, it is true that man has free will,—that is, has the natural power of choosing otherwise than he does,—and they decide that he has.

By a similar false assertion, the reviewer tries to destroy the influence of my argument from the Bible. — p. 195. There is, however, no need of further reply. He takes good care, as before, to rest in mere assertion. He gives his readers no opportunity to judge for themselves. If his purpose was, not to aid in a candid inquiry what is the truth, but merely to destroy the influence of my arguments, for party purposes, he took perhaps the most effectual course to gain such an end.

But now, if any one should say, with the reviewer (p. 186), "Liberty must be the attribute of an agent, and not of a faculty." But is the will an independent agent, or a faculty? And is it proper, then, to say that a faculty, or its action, is free, or has freedom? Is it not the man who is free? I answer, Yes, it is the man who is free. And when I, and other Calvinists, say the will is free, we mean

that the man who wills is free in willing, and, in the words of the Confession, "is not compelled, or determined by any absolute necessity of nature, to good or evil." So, also, when I say choice is free, I mean that the man who chooses is free in his choice. But what then? The question still is, *Is man free in willing, or only in acting as he wills?* President Day, in reply to this allegation, that the will is not an agent, and that liberty properly belongs to an agent, and not to a faculty, very correctly says, "Still it may be proper to inquire whether the man is free in his *willing*, as well as in his external actions. Is he possessed of freedom in his volitions, as well as in his bodily movements?"—*Exam. of Edwards*, p. 81.

But though, in fact, it is the man who is free, it is not unusual or improper to express the idea that man is free in willing by saying that the will is free, or that choice is free. Nothing is more common, even in the highest authorities, than to speak of faculties as if they were agents. Edwards says, "That which *the will prefers*, to that, all things considered, *it preponderates and inclines.*" Yet elsewhere he says, "Actions are to be ascribed to agents, and not properly to the powers of agents." Yet who, in the first case, would suppose that Edwards did not know that the will was a faculty, and not an agent, although he ascribed actions to it? Who, too, would ever misunderstand him? After a man has once declared his belief in the revolution of the earth on its axis, must he never again say that the sun rises and sets, for fear of some hypercritical charge of error? So, after a full statement that the real fact is that it is the man who is *free in choosing*, must we never again say the will is free, or choice is free, lest some new-fledged metaphysician should again pounce upon us Calvinists, not excepting the Princeton

divines, with charges of inconsistent and inaccurate use of language?

I make these general remarks as an answer to a large part of all the reviewer's charges on me of a confused and inaccurate use of language. Let him be as candid towards me as he would be towards Edwards, or Locke, or the Westminster divines, or the Princeton reviewers themselves, and most of his charges will at once disappear. For example, even if I do sometimes speak of "the natural inability of the will," or "the natural power of the will," the phrases are not, as the reviewer alleges, "destitute of meaning," or "absurd."—p. 174. They denote, as before, the natural inability or power of the man in whom the will is. So, too, the expression, "the will is under no such necessity as destroys its own power of choice" (p. 174), is not devoid of an obvious and proper meaning. Let it be interpreted on the same principles which are applied to the language of Edwards or the Westminster divines, in the cases already referred to, and it means "the man who wills is under no such necessity as destroys his own power of choice." If this, as the reviewer tells us, is a "vague and slipshod use of terms" (p. 175), then let the Princeton reviewers look well to their own language and example; for they say, "All will admit that *the natural faculty of will exerts the choice.*"—Vol. I. p. 255. And so repeatedly, in other instances, they use language just as I do.

In one instance the reviewer takes advantage of a captious interpretation of terms, or of the condensation of my style in certain passages, to make out the charge of a vagueness in the use of the terms *cause* and *effect*, which he says is "remarkable, even in Dr. Beecher."—p. 172. I will state the passages, and, where necessary, restore the unexpressed

links of thought, as my sufficient defence against his charge.

“The supposition of accountability for choice, coërced by natural necessity, is contrary to the nature of things, as God has constituted them. The relation of cause and effect pervades the universe. The natural world is full of it. It is the basis of all science, and all intellectual operation, with respect to mind. Can the intellect be annihilated, and thinking go on? No more can the power of choice be annihilated, and free agency remain.”

Here the reviewer suppresses what follows to complete the statement, and charges me with asserting that free agency, taken as a capacity, is *the effect* of the power of choice. But I do not say this; I merely say that it cannot exist without the power of choice, and then proceed to state what other powers are necessary to *constitute* free agency; and then assert that if these do not exist, it is not just to demand voluntary obedience to the law, since this would be demanding an effect without a cause. In this case free choice is the effect, and the powers that constitute free agency are the cause. Is this vague, or obscure?

Again, I say, “The supposition of continued responsibility, after all the powers of causation (that is, as to choice) are gone, is contrary to the common sense and intuitive perception of all mankind. On the subject of moral obligation (as to choice), all men can see and do see that there can be no effect without a cause (and therefore no obligation to choose right without a power so to choose). That nothing cannot produce something is an intuitive perception, and you cannot help it. This is the basis of that illustrious demonstration by which you prove the being of a God.” Here he charges me with improperly asserting that responsibility, or moral obligation, is an *effect*

of the power of choice ; whereas my language, when the obvious links of thought are fairly supplied, only means that responsibility cannot exist without the power of choice.

Again I say, "Material causes, while upheld by Heaven, are adequate to their proper effects ; and the mind of man, though fallen, is, while upheld, a cause (of free choice) sufficient, in respect to the possibility of obedience, to create infinite obligation (to obey)." Here he represents me as improperly asserting that the mind of man is a cause of the possibility of obedience and of infinite obligation ; whereas the whole train of thought plainly shows that I regarded the mind of man as a sufficient cause *of choice*, and on that ground giving rise to infinite obligation to obey, as appears from restoring the obvious and proper links of thought.

Upon this array of particulars he then founds the charge, which I have proved to be false, that I teach that the will or mind of man is, in the proper sense, *a cause*, not of free choice, but of free agency, viewed as a *capacity*, and of responsibility, and of the possibility of obedience, and of infinite obligation,—things unlike in nature, and which, properly speaking, are not effects at all.

He then, with affected forbearance, says, "Respect for Dr. Beecher restrains us from employing the only becoming and adequate mode of exposing such argumentation as this." Nevertheless he assures us that it must leave "its disparaging mark on me," as a reasoner and a divine. Nay, he makes it an occasion of an ungentlemanlike and undignified sneer at me, for having once said to Dr. Porter that my method of philosophizing was the Baconian.

I would not enter into such unwelcome details, if it were not for the fact that the main effect of the review depends upon an accumulation of such things. "No one," says the

reviewer, "who reads the extracts we have given, or still less if he reads the treatise from which they are taken, will wonder that Dr. Beecher should have felt it necessary to inform Dr. Porter, and through him the public at large, that his method of philosophizing was the Baconian." What is this but an effort to neutralize my whole argument in advance, even before attempting fairly to meet my reasoning, and that by a sneer based upon a captious and unfair interpretation of my language? Nor are such things without great effect. In partisan minds, prepared for their influence, they immediately beget a spirit of insolent contempt, and a prejudice before argument, upon which no reasoning, however fair, can exert any power. To produce such effects, and thus to accomplish partisan ends, I know of nothing better adapted than this review, taken as a whole. Therefore it cannot be effectually answered until I have shown what is the secret of its malignant power, at least by a few examples.

In another case, merely to illustrate the absurdities of Fatalism, I *supposed* choice to be produced by wheels and water-power, but did not say that I regarded it as possible. In view of this, he contemptuously says, "Dr. Beecher is the only writer we have ever met with who seemed to suppose that the will could be moved by water-power, or propelled by steam," and represents me as gravely attempting to prove "that man is not accountable for those of his volitions that are worked out of him by water-power;" just as if I had expressed a belief that there were or could be any such volitions! No doubt such things will have, on many minds, the designed effect. But is this the way to represent a Christian brother, in candor and in truth?

In a very few instances, his verbal criticisms were well founded. In such cases, I have availed myself of his strict-

ures, however unfriendly, to render my use of terms more clear and precise. But, wherever I have neglected his criticisms, I regard them as obviously unjust, even if I make no reply.

In one case he exposes an error of interpretation caused by relying solely on the English version of Jer. 7 : 10,—“ We are delivered to do these abominations.” Here I erroneously took the word “ delivered ” in the sense “ given up,” or “ abandoned.” If the reviewer had, for the sake of the truth and in a friendly spirit, pointed out this, or any other error, I would have received it with gratitude. But this was not his end or spirit. He avowedly exposed it to “ show how little reliance is to be placed on Dr. Beecher as an interpreter of Scripture.” Thus he draws a universal inference of incompetency from a single error ; just as if incidental errors of interpretation were not so common that few, if any, leading divines can be pointed out who are entirely free from them. Certainly, Edwards, Turretin and Calvin, were very far from such freedom. I refer to this because it illustrates the general drift of the review ; that is, in every possible way to destroy my character and influence as a logician, an interpreter and a divine.

For a similar purpose, he severely scrutinizes my list of Fatalists, for the sake, as he distinctly avows, “ of showing how far it is safe to trust Dr. Beecher’s accuracy in matters of history.” He has detected, I concede, one or two errors. But he has himself been guilty of more than he has detected in me, notwithstanding all his insolence and sarcasm. For example, I speak of the Stoics as Fatalists. He at once turns to Dugald Stewart, and finds in him a reference to the first *sentence* of the Enchiridion of Epictetus as a proof that they held to free will. Next, either by his own blunder, or by

that of the printer, this is learnedly set forth as the first "*instance*" in the *Enchiridion* of Epictetus, but it is not quoted, and was probably never read, or even seen, by the reviewer. He then quotes the opinion of Stewart himself, that the Stoics carried their notions of the liberty of the will to an unphilosophical extreme.* Now, that the reviewer had never made any original investigation of this matter, but had merely, in his hasty search for something to use against me, relied on what came first to hand in Stewart, is plain from this,—that the more recent and accurate investigations of Ritter fully justify my assertions, and the common opinion as to the Fatalism of the Stoics, and show that the free will which they asserted was merely nominal. He proves, by clear authorities, that, according to them, matter was originally in God, as an essential part of him, and had laws of its nature above his will; and that he developed the world out of himself, according to certain fixed laws of fate, and that by the same laws all will be again destroyed; "for all is ordered by the laws of necessity, and has the life of a self-developing animal." Viewing God and the universe together, "the whole appeared to them merely as a material God, who, both in and out of himself, is subjected to the force of necessity." They did, indeed, he allows, try to escape such a result by a verbal denial of the subjection of God to necessity; but he clearly proves that the very ground-principles of their system implied his subjection to real necessity, as originating not only from an eternal chain of causation, but also from the nature of the very essence or matter of God, in subordination to the necessary laws of which, all of his developments must proceed.

* Still further to embarrass a thorough inquirer, the reference to Stewart's works is to the wrong page. He refers to vol. vi. p. 241. It should have been 471, or else vol. v. p. 594.

So also, though in words they extolled the freedom of the will of man, still they held that his nature and propensities were assigned to him by a fate above any power of his own, or of God, for even he cannot suspend or repeal the laws of matter: and, though they denied a necessary subjection of the will to the power of external objects, they none the less subjected it to an absolute internal necessity, created by the fated constitution and propensities of man.—See Ritter, translated by Morrison, vol. III. pp. 515, 518, 526, 532—536, 554—556.

Relying still on the aid of Stewart, he proceeds to prove, from Lucretius, that the Epicureans held to a will set free from fate, and refers to Cicero as of the same opinion. If he had taken the pains to look thoroughly into the matter, and to read Cicero, to whom he refers, he would have found that the free will which the Epicureans professed in words Cicero regarded as merely a ridiculous pretence. They held that the soul, as well as all things else, was but a fortuitous concourse of atoms; and that free will, so called, was but a fortuitous motion of these atoms, out of the perpendicular line, in which they naturally descend,—a motion totally without reason, and entirely uncertain in time or place. Cicero, moreover, not only adverts to this ridiculous theory of pretended free will, but also says concerning it, “No one seems to me more to establish, not only the doctrine of fate, but the necessity and compulsory power of all things, and to have destroyed all real voluntary agency, than he who confesses that he could in no other way refute the doctrine of fate than by resorting to these pretended irregular motions of atoms.” — *Cic. de Fato*, 20, 48.

On this point, also, Stewart, his one great oracle, says, “Lucretius, indeed, speaks of this liberty as an exception to

universal Fatalism; but he, nevertheless, considers it as a necessary effect of some cause, to which he gives the name of *clinamen*, so as to render man as completely a piece of passive mechanism as he was supposed to be by Collins and Hobbes." — Vol. v. p. 593. To this Stewart adds, "The reason which he gives for this is, that, if the case were otherwise, *there would be an effect without a cause.*"

If the reviewer's practical theory is a good one,—that it is sufficient to destroy the influence of a man's reputation, and of his whole argument, to point out some incidental errors,—then, for aught I see, he has, in the blundering criticism which I have exposed, thoroughly neutralized his own authority as a critic. It ought here, also, to be remarked, that the opinion of Ritter concerning the Fatalism of the Stoics is by no means peculiar to him. Eschenberg, in his manual of classical literature, does not hesitate to say that "the doctrine of fate was one of their (the Stoics') grand peculiarities. They considered all things as controlled by an eternal necessity, to which even the Deity submitted; and this was supposed to be the origin of evil." — *Fisk's Translation*, p. 228.

In the History of Philosophy adopted by the University of France, and translated by C. S. Henry, D.D., it is stated, as a principle of the Stoic philosophy, "that everything is subject to the laws of fate; for God, or the primitive intelligent fluid, can act only according to his nature, and the nature of the passive principle which he ensouls; and souls emanated from the universal soul are, for the same reason, subject to fatal laws in their sphere of action." — Vol. I. p. 164. The historian also admits that the system recognized ideas of justice and holiness, and also of duty and obligation; but regards these as merely a contradiction of

the undeniable principles of the system. So general is this view, that Webster, also, in his quarto dictionary, presents it, and refers to Enfield as teaching that the Stoics held that all things are governed by an unavoidable necessity. Even, then, if I had erred in adopting as true an opinion so current, and nearly universal, it would have been no good ground for insult and reproach; but, since I was correct, and my critic at fault, it is easy to see upon whom the reproach, if any is to be borne, ought to fall. I disapprove, however, of the whole style of criticism pursued by the reviewer, and have no disposition to imitate his evil example.

As to Bolingbroke, whom I classed with the Fatalists, it is true that in some passages he clearly teaches free agency in form; and yet he no less clearly teaches the materialism of the soul, which is the fundamental principle of material Fatalists, and denies a special providence, and individual retribution, in this or the future state, if there is any, which he does not admit. Tholuck, in his "*History of Theology in the Eighteenth Century*," *published in the Biblical Repertory, with approval*, says of him, "He seems, on the whole, to have approached very near to *materialistic atheism*, denying the moral attributes of God, and admitting only his wisdom and power." When, in connection with this, we consider his licentious life, and his notorious habit of professing, for effect, what he did not really believe, his assertions of free agency are no proof that in reality he held that doctrine, and did not hold to the legitimate results of his materialistic atheism. Did he not assert, in a great variety of forms, his belief of the divine origin and authority of Christianity, as set forth in the gospels? And yet, is any one simple enough to believe that he was not an enemy and

a disbeliever of Christianity? Yet, on the whole, I have chosen to omit his name from my list of Fatalists.

As to Descartes, it is true that he was no Fatalist; it was an error to call him such. I did, in fact, by a slip of memory, confound him with his contemporary Gassendi, who, in fact, revived and defended the theory of atoms set forth by Epicurus, and based his natural philosophy upon it. Still, even Gassendi did not deny the existence and creative power of God; but, atoms being created, he explained the universe by them. The reviewer next pretends not to know whether Spinoza was a Fatalist or not! Probably he did not know whether he was a Pantheist or not: or, perhaps, he did not know whether Pantheism is, of necessity, a system of Fatalism. All this professed ignorance, so discreditable to him as a scholar, seems to be assumed, for the sake of avoiding, as far as possible, any acknowledgment of the accuracy of any of my statements. For the same reason, he undertakes at great length, but fruitlessly, to vindicate the materialist Hobbes from the charge of Fatalism.

And yet it is worthy of notice, that in the very collection of Princeton essays which contains this vindication of Hobbes there is an article by Neander, already referred to, in which the same charge of Fatalism for which I am arraigned is made against him, with the implied approval of the editors. His words are, "He maintained that God and the angels were not spirits, and *denied the liberty of man.*" Again, he says, "His materialism produced, for a time, considerable effect; *the doctrine of human liberty*, and the existence of spirits, were rendered doubtful in the minds of many, and even a species of atheism became, to a certain extent, prevalent." — Vol. I. p. 566, 567.

If all this, as said by Neander, is so true and important

as to be published, without criticism or censure, in the *Biblical Repertory*, and is meritorious enough to be republished in one of their permanent volumes, then how happens it that, when I say the same things, they are at length discovered to be false and censurable, and are published as such in the same collection? Does it not look as if the great point to be carried by the Princeton divines was to accumulate errors on me at all hazards, even if, in so doing, they introduced inconsistencies and contradictions into their own select works?

I pay so much attention to these historical statements merely because the reviewer seems to rely on them so greatly for effect. And yet, as affecting the logical force of my argument, they are of no weight whatever. What if I do happen, occasionally, to err in making out a list of Fatalists? Does it therefore follow that there are no Fatalists, and that there is no such thing as Fatalism, and that the elements of Fatalism have not been, in all ages, such as I have represented? It would have been more to the purpose, if the reviewer, after wasting so much time on such alleged errors as even if correctly alleged were merely incidental, had at length met me with sound arguments on the main question; but this is precisely what he failed to do.

Besides these modes of attack on me, the reviewer tries, here and there, to prove incidental inconsistencies and contradictions. For example, I assert, in my argument, that in the sense assumed by Fatalists motives are not *causes* of volition; that is, strictly and properly, necessitating causes. In another place, however, I teach that the truth is instrumental as a moral cause, when used by God in regenerating the soul. Here, he exclaims, is a palpable inconsistency; — just as if I did not plainly use the word *cause* in two senses

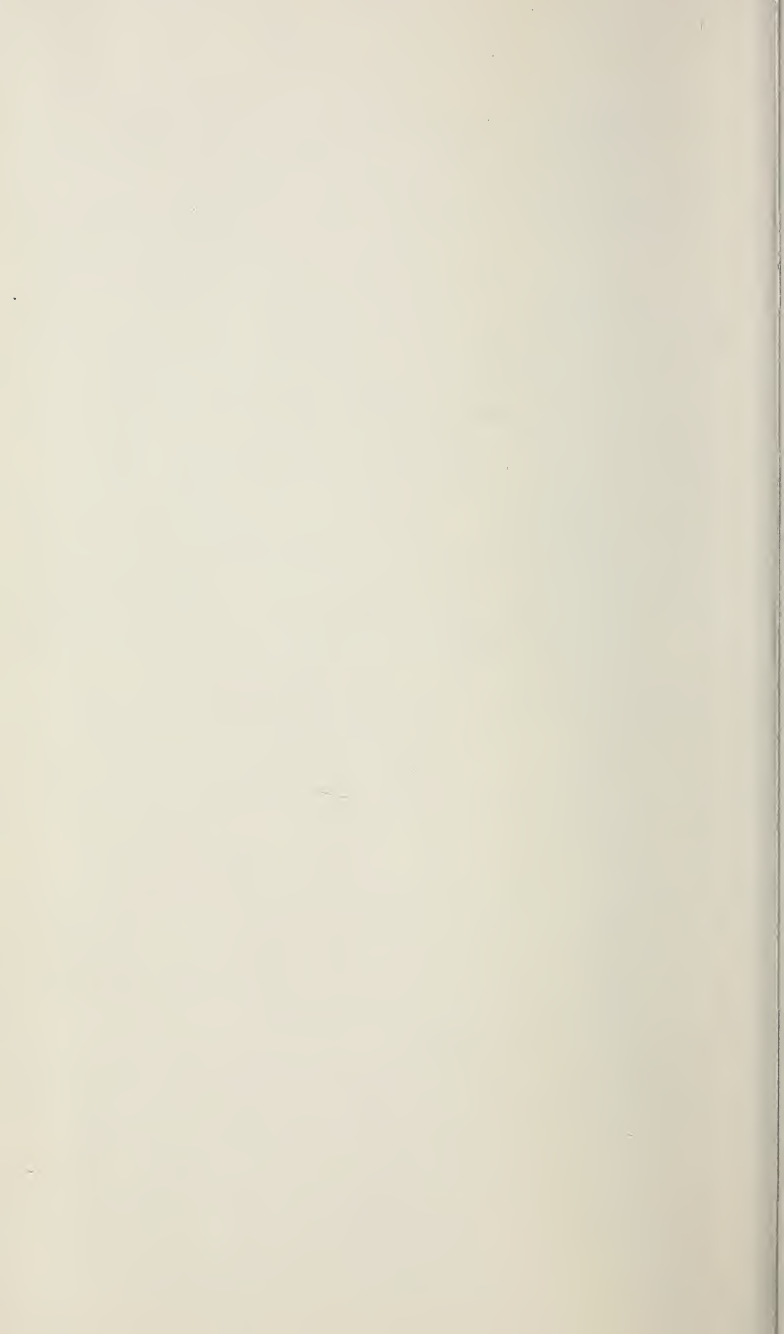
in these two cases — one in a material, the other in a moral sense! — See p. 176.

Again, I affirm that the simple ability of choosing wrong *is nothing* as an explanation of the fact of uniform and unreasonable wrong choice. How, then, asks the reviewer, can the ability to choose right be *everything*, as I elsewhere teach? Here, he exclaims, is another inconsistency. Just as if what I said in the second case were not this: that ability to choose right is of supreme importance as *a basis of responsibility* for right or wrong choice, and not as an explanation of the reason why men choose either right or wrong! — pp. 176, 177.

Such are the flimsy proofs in view of which he goes on to allege that, though I may be a good orator and rhetorician, I am worthy of no confidence as a logician or a metaphysician. — p. 177. All that I can say, in reply to such criticism, is, that it is sufficient for me to provide clear ideas and sound arguments; I am under no obligation to provide for the reviewer the capacity or the candor needed to understand them. The same remarks may be made with reference to his opening harangue, at the beginning of the second part of his review. It is a mere piece of objurgatory rhetoric, designed for effect, and has no basis whatever in a candid and intelligent interpretation of my language and argument, taken as a whole.

What, now, can be the real reason of such a course towards me? To my mind it is clear that, had I been willing to coincide with certain men, of a certain party, in certain practical measures, I should have been left undisturbed in my theology, especially as every tribunal, from the Presbytery to the General Assembly, had sustained my orthodoxy and condemned my accuser, — and

that with the concurrence of the Princeton gentlemen themselves, in the General Assembly. But, after all, with reference to certain favorite practical measures, I still proved refractory; and then, however it may be accounted for, the review came, and it was such as I have shown. The reviewer, I am aware, ridicules the idea of a purpose to write me down. I shall go into no controversy on that point. I have my own knowledge of facts and coincidences, and my own belief; but, whatever may have been the origin of the review, it is enough for me to have shown what it is, and to have left on record, for all who love the truth, this vindication of my character and my views. In conclusion, I commend my labors, on the important and fundamental doctrines discussed in this volume, to the candid consideration of my fellow-men, and to the care and vindication of my God.



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